

TRUTH FOR THE TIME.

(PART XIII.)

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THE REFUGE OF SAINTS IN A DAY OF DARKNESS.

(PHIL. III. 17-21.)

I DESIRE to say a little in regard to the place which is given in scripture to the heavens and the earth—that is, their place relatively. The apprehension of it may be a help, in enabling us to understand the influences by which the people of God are to be governed down here.

We are all much exposed to influences of earth, and I do not think (as far as I know myself) there is anything by which we are so affected as influences. They are extremely subtle, and one comes almost insensibly under the power of them down here. If you see a violent man you can avoid him, but it is extremely difficult to avoid an influence. It is in the air, as one might say, and we are affected and defiled very often before we are aware of it. Hence it becomes a matter of great moment to know the influences to which we are exposed down here.

The scriptures begin with the heavens and the earth and end with the heavens and the earth. I just call your attention to a passage in Peter's

second epistle. (Chap. iii. 7, 13.) "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." Then if you look on to Revelation xxi. 1 you read, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Revelation looks on to the accomplishment of that of which Peter speaks. You will notice that the scripture gives precedence to the heavens. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I have no doubt that this is intentional. It is a principle which will be brought into effect in due time, that the heavens rule, and the heavens will rule morally, not simply politically. I will come to that presently in connection with our citizenship. But God has, in the first instance, been pleased to make the earth the scene of His ways, and in the main the Old Testament is taken up with the development of those ways upon earth. There is very little about heaven in the Old Testament, and yet it is plain that the heavens had precedence of the earth. God set great lights in the heavens, and they were to rule the earth. Yet in God's ways the earth comes first into view. In the same way there is a spiritual body, and there is a natural body, but the natural comes first into view, and yet the spiritual takes precedence of the natural, as according to the purpose of God. In the Old Testament the course of events is pretty much this : God begins

by dealing in discipline with individuals—as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; then you get a nation taken up in connection with the ways of God. There was the throne of God in Jerusalem and a system of nations, in the midst of which God exercised influence; and after that a succession of beasts or empires. This last has been continued till the present time. The Lord referred to it, “the times of the Gentiles” have to be fulfilled. The times of the Gentiles are going on still, and Jerusalem is trodden under foot. But the system of nations taken up in the Old Testament, with Jerusalem as its centre, looks on also to the future when the throne of David will be re-established; very little of heaven comes into view; just enough to shew that it had a great place in the thoughts of God with regard to man.

You get heaven first coming into view in regard to Enoch. Death had come in by sin. Enoch was translated that he should not see death. The effect that faith had on him was this—he prophesied, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment on the ungodly;” he had faith to be translated, as we see in Hebrews xi.

Further on we get Abraham, and heaven comes into view in connection with him. Two things mark him, “He looked for a city which hath

foundations whose builder and maker is God ;” and he “sought a better, that is a heavenly country.” The fathers were not content with the land of promise ; God shewed it to them, but they sought a better, that is a heavenly, country. I suppose this means that they sought a country where God dwelt. Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.” Therefore, “God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city.”

I pass on a little further, and in the book of Isaiah we are told that God creates new heavens and a new earth, and we get another thought : that Heaven is God’s throne ; the earth is His footstool.

I refer to these passages to shew that heaven had a place in the thought of God and in the faith of men, but it was not prominent, and God was unfolding His ways in regard to the earth, which will have their issue in the kingdom in a future day.

I pass on now to the New Testament, and the first thing you find is that there is a stir in heaven, and from that point and forward heaven takes precedence, it gets its own proper place. In the Old Testament while God was testing man heaven could not get its proper place. Abraham’s faith went beyond that testing ;

there is no testing of faith in heaven. I have no doubt the faith of other men went beyond that testing, still in the main the Old Testament is taken up with the testing. But the New Testament is different. It means the establishment by God of all that was in His mind, and from the outset the heavens are astir. The stir is first in connection with the birth of Christ. When Christ was born the heavenly hosts announced—"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good pleasure in man." I refer to this because it shews heaven in motion in connection with the birth of Christ.

You will find it of interest to observe the way in which heaven comes into view in connection with the pathway of the Lord Jesus down here on earth. First the Lord is baptised in due time; the Holy Ghost comes down and a voice from heaven says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The same thing occurs on the Mount of Transfiguration. Heaven comes into view in connection with Jesus, and there came a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." I think it is of great interest to see the movement in heaven in connection with the presence of Christ here. It is perfectly natural.

The point before me is this: the heavens were

getting their own proper precedence and it all meant the superiority of all that was of heaven. It leads on in result to the rule of heaven. We see the "living bread" come down from heaven, not merely a voice from heaven, nor even the Holy Ghost from heaven, but "living bread" come down from heaven to give life to the world. Now you see the source of life. The life of the world is dependent on the living bread come down from heaven.

I would like to point out some of the moral excellencies of what came down from heaven.

All here are doubtless pretty familiar with the idea of the living bread come down from heaven. To begin with, there was in it untainted and unselfish love, a thing hitherto completely unknown in man. There never had been seen the like. Another thing was seen in the living bread come down from heaven—unwearying goodness. This came out in the path of the Lord Jesus down here. You have only to read the gospels to see it. Another thing—there was meekness and lowliness, and with this complete superiority to every influence of earth. And further—there was power and energy against all the force of evil that could say, "I have overcome the world." "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." I only just put these points before you, as I would like

all to reflect on what has come down here to earth, and been set forth in the living bread *come down from heaven—perfect holy love, unwearying goodness, meekness and lowliness superior to every influence of earth; and influences of a character commendable in the eye of man, had no place there.* At the same time, Christ was the “lion of the tribe of Judah,” strong to resist every power of evil. Satan had no power at all against the Lord.

Just let me call your attention to Revelation v. 5, 6 for a moment. I want to point out two expressions brought into juxtaposition: the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb as it had been slain. These expressions come out in connection with the kingdom. The form used for “Lamb” is a diminutive—no doubt an expression of affection—but it is curious that in the two verses you should get the lion and the lamb brought together. All this will come out in the kingdom. When the Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass, He came meek. Whoever heard of that in a King? In our modern notions of kings we admire condescension and that sort of thing; but in this King there is meekness. It is recorded of Moses that he was the meekest man on earth. The Lord had title, but with the greatest title He was meek. He said, “I am

meek and lowly in heart." But at the same time, He is the lion of the tribe of Judah ; He is strong against evil. We need to measure things according to God not according to man. We see people often admiring things that are according to man, not according to God, and this affects one painfully. I have only tried to indicate what came out in the living bread come down from heaven. I could not attempt to describe it ; I can only take two or three features : love, goodness, meekness, and energy against the power of evil. But what I may say in regard of it is, It was too good for earth. It was living bread from heaven and that could not find its permanent abode on earth. It came to earth. The Lord will no doubt in result give life to the world, but the abode of goodness must be with God. It is *of* God and its permanent abode *is with* God. Though it came to earth for a moment, the rapture must take place. It must go up to heaven. That is the principle of Psalm xvi. You find in that Psalm something so surpassingly excellent, that it cannot remain on earth ; it must go up to the right hand of God in heaven. In Revelation xii. the man-child is caught up to God on account of the moral excellence there, which was too bright for earth and must go to heaven.

Now we come to another point. There must

be the continuation of Christ here morally in His body. The church is the body of Christ; and if it is the body of Christ, it must set forth Christ. My body is the vessel in which I am set forth, but it is not impossible to distinguish myself from my body. What a man is gets no expression except through his body, and I take it that is what the church is to Christ, the vessel in which He is set forth. It is said of the body in Ephesians i. it is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Every lineament of Christ was set forth in the body down here. I look upon the church in that sense as the continuation of Christ. There was thus a witness to the world, and that witness was to be maintained in unity. You get this in John xvii.: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The unity of saints was witness of the unity of the Father and the Son, the witness to the world that the Father sent the Son. This will come out in glory. The body of Christ served that purpose down here, but as Christ belonged to heaven, it is clear the body must go up to heaven. You could not separate Christ from His body. The body belongs to heaven, not to earth. What is set forth in the body was nothing short of

Christ, properly speaking. The church left its first love, I know; but if Christ was caught up to heaven, the body of Christ must be caught up to heaven. The man-child in Revelation xii. has been held to be a picture of Christ and the church. Heaven is the place and the expectation of the church.

It is plain that the witness of the church has been completely obscured. It is vain in the present day to talk much about it. In a general way saints have lost all idea of the truth of the body of Christ, hence unity has been almost completely surrendered, and it cannot be doubted that the church has lost very largely its proper place of witness. It has left its first love and lost its true place on earth. It has taken a worldly place, and has come under the power of earthly influence, and has lost its own proper heavenly light and lustre. The body is here, I know, as the Spirit is here; but it is clear that the heavenly light and lustre have been obscured. The point is—what remains for us?

I see a great principle in scripture, pointed out years ago, that when failure has come to pass in any dispensation, it is no use to go back to the past; you must go on to what is to come. You find that in the old days. There were those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and who waited for the Redeemer. This is seen

in Luke's gospel, in Simeon and Anna and others.

What have we to look for? I think, for the heavenly city. That led me to read the passage in Philippians iii. Things had gone very much to the bad in the apostle's days—the mass were minding earthly things. Then it is that he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven." I think it is when things have gone into decay that the citizenship comes into view.

Another thing becomes prominent, and that is eternal life. It was not so prominent a thought when the church was in its first estate, but comes more into view when things are in decay. It is seen in the later epistles, as was pointed out years ago, that the apostle Paul speaks of himself as apostle in connection with the hope of eternal life. The city and eternal life belong properly to the world to come; but they become prominent when the church has failed in its proper place as witness on earth. Then we are cast very much on the city and eternal life. "Grasp eternal life," the apostle says to Timothy.

But what I want to refer to is the thought that "Our citizenship is in heaven." I do not think you can know much about this practically except as you know something about the heavenly city. The idea of a city in scripture is that of a source and centre of light and rule and blessing.

Jerusalem was that in some sort upon earth. You find many expressions of this in the psalms. Jerusalem was compact, the joy of the earth, the gathering centre of the tribes, and so on. The divine idea, I do not doubt, was that the city of the great King was to be a source of light and rule upon earth. If that was true of the earthly city, how much more of the heavenly city! We want to be well acquainted with the heavenly city. I should recommend every one to seek to become acquainted with the moral features and excellencies of the heavenly city. In the idea of rule upon earth in the present time there are many elements, for example, diplomacy, expediency, might; but you may be confident that no principle of that kind can have any place in the city of the living God. In the heavenly city all must be according to God and suitable to His nature; there can be nothing in the city that is contrary to any attribute of God. You may take that for granted. The walls are great and high; everything will be excluded that is not consistent with the holiness of God. It will bear being measured. All is according to the righteousness of God. All His rights are maintained there. The righteousness of God has its proper place there, and so I might go on. You get perfection of light in it. "Its light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper

stone clear as crystal." The throne of God and the Lamb are there—the moral sway of God and the Lamb are absolute and complete. The river of living water flows from it. It is a source of living water to the nations—health-giving influences issue from it.

I allude to these few features, for if you do not understand a little about the heavenly city you will not understand much about our citizenship being in heaven. All is according to God, and no attribute of God can find any contradiction in the heavenly city. You have to take that into account. And another thing is said, "Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother." There is liberty. And yet another thing is said, it is, "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." It is a great thing to take into account the moral power connected with the Lord Jesus to subdue all things unto Himself. And it is in connection with the heavenly city that the heavens get their proper precedence. The earth ceases to have the place it had; heaven comes into prominence, and it will ever have precedence. Light and rule have their source in heaven. The earthly Jerusalem will never have quite the

same place again, because the heavenly comes in, and the throne of God and of the Lamb are in it. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honour unto it. Nothing enters into it which defiles ; all that is unworthy and contaminating is excluded by the very power and energy of life that marks all that is of God.

I only just sought to bring these things under your notice, for it is interesting to see that though God for a time continued His ways on earth, yet heaven is to have precedence, and the time has come when heaven is in view. In the New Testament it comes very much to the front, and when you get the consummation of God's ways the heavenly city comes out to give light and bear rule on the earth.

We have to accept the fact that our being here is in a way a witness to it. All has failed in the church. Its light has become obscured by an immense mass of unholy profession, which bears the name of Christ upon earth. It is not much good going back upon the past ; we want to have fully and continually in view the marks of that which will be prominent in the world to come. It is of great moment that we should understand that our citizenship is in heaven, and that we have only to await the coming of the Lord from heaven.

F. E. R.



FAITHFULNESS TO GOD'S THOUGHTS FOR HIS PEOPLE.

(NUM. XIV. 6-9 AND 17-24 ; JOSH. XIV. 6-14, XV. 1.)

BELoved brethren,—What has been said to us I desire to follow up a little. We must all be conscious, very conscious, of the failure of the church as we speak, and of the influences that are around us—influences that are of a corrupting character. While most of us would not think of going into the wicked things of the world (we would not go to theatres, or race-courses, or the like), I think we have little idea of how we are influenced by the course of things down here. I am only thankful it has been brought before us because I feel we do need to be warned against it. It is not merely that as Christians we are influenced by the course of things in the world, to that we are all liable as being in the world ; but as servants of the Lord, those who take any place of serving Him have little idea how we are influenced by the ways and doings of men, even of religious men, and have to set our faces against it.

I would like to look a little at the history of

Caleb, but the great thought upon my mind was this, that the tribe of Judah really got their inheritance from the faithfulness of one man. Caleb and Joshua were the remnant of that day, and they hold to the thoughts of God about His people, and in so doing Caleb affects others.

It conveys this to me, that one person whose face is set right may be the means of great blessing to many. Take any little company of saints, any little assembly, if there be only one who is real and true and faithful to the Lord, the company will be greatly affected. It may be in a very little matter that I have to set my face against the course of things here, for I am not speaking of teachers or preachers, or of those who are prominent, for I do not see *that* in Caleb; he is faithful to God's thought for His people, but if the Lord gives us grace to set our faces against the current of things here and to seek to be true to the Lord in the sphere where we are, the effect may be very great. The effect in this case was that Caleb got the place for his inheritance, where he had set his foot down 45 years before, where the Anakims dwelt, the city of Hebron, or Kirjath-arba. The point with Joshua and Caleb was they had the sense of the love of the Lord to His people. It was not a question as to whether the people could meet the Anakims; the question was, was the soul con-

scious of the love of the Lord? I admit His love could not be known as we know it, but Joshua and Caleb say, "If the Lord delight in us he will bring us in." They entered into the love of the Lord in that sense, and could speak of the Lord's delight in His people, and say He is with us. Suppose the Anakims were giants, and had cities great and mighty with high walls. Caleb says the Lord is with *us*. What an immense fact for any soul to lay hold of, and the youngest soul can apprehend it, the Lord loves His people! I would be sorry to stand up here to-day if I did not believe that the Lord loves His people. I am sure of it; and I am equally sure that there is no one here who has an expectation of faith from the Lord who will not be conscious of the Lord's love to His people. Caleb had the sense of that, and when it comes to the point he says, "Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee. . . . Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God," and he says, "If the Lord be with me I shall be able to drive them out."

There is a verse in the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 25) which says, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." That is often taken to

mean, as the day comes round we shall get strength for it. I have no doubt we do, but I think it means more than that, that as we go on we go from strength to strength spiritually. Man naturally goes from strength to weakness, but as Christians we go from strength to strength. For instance, a man of 70 or 80 is weaker than one of 60, but it ought to be with us spiritually, that the older we grow the more strong we are, because our strength is in the Lord. We learn to distrust ourselves; we learn to be meek and lowly. We read of Moses, who has been referred to already as the meekest man who ever lived, that his natural force was not abated nor his eye dim when he went up Mount Pisgah to die. I know he was sustained of the Lord, but so are we, beloved friends. We may have been converted ten years or twenty years—what has carried us along while treading the pathway all these years? What has kept us to this day? And I would ask the youngest believer (perhaps there is one here not more than twelve months converted), what has kept you those twelve months? The same thing that has kept us, it may be, through 40 years like Caleb and Moses. The grace of the Lord has kept each of us. Our strength is in the Lord. The Lord's grace and the sense that the soul has of His love. What can be the strength of any soul but the sense of

the love of the Lord? "If the Lord delight in us." Why ever did He take us up at the first, why should He have had mercy on us? Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart, Moses says to Israel, doth the Lord give you the land. It is thus that we become conscious of the delight the Lord has in us; we know the love of the Lord to His people, and Caleb could go forward and say, "I am strong to-day to go out as ever I was." Why? Because the Lord was his strength.

So the journey of the church through the wilderness lengthens out, but there should be a kind of juvenescence about us, going from strength to strength; there ought to be freshness and youth because the Lord is the same as in the days of Caleb and Joshua. We may be getting toward the close of the wilderness, but light from heaven ought to be illumining our hearts, and we ought to be in the freshness and vigour of the Spirit of the Lord. It is a beautiful thought in Ephesians iv.: "being renewed in the spirit of your mind." I think it means being kept spiritually in constant youth, as it says in the Psalms, "anointed with fresh oil." You never grow old spiritually, or if you do grow old in the wilderness, you acquire fresh strength, you know the Lord better; you trust Him more. We ought, as gathered here, to know the Lord

better than we did last year. We are conscious of many changes, but we ought to know Him and His love better.

Well, as I have said, if it be but one person really true to the Lord, see how it affects others. The tribe of Judah got their inheritance where Caleb got his. In coming together at a time like this, we need not be looking for teaching from one another, or for something new, but we want to get near to the Lord, to be simply here in trueness of heart and realising the love of the Lord to us. He teaches as none other can.

It is a beautiful word that was read to us just now. "From whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." We look for a Person. We look for the Lord. Let me ask you, are we getting in spirit near Him? Have we found in Him all our springs? The more I go on the more I see how *nothing* I am, and I turn to the Lord more than ever for everything. I find that all my springs are in Him. The more I think of the Person of the blessed Lord, the more I see *He is*. I could not tell you what I feel as to that word "I am." It has been spoken of by another in a wonderful way as to what there was in the Lord saying, "I am." Everything for us subsists in Him. The whole universe of bliss will subsist in Him and yet He supports us now in priestly grace. He is "the same yester-

day, to-day, and for ever." All our springs are in Him. We draw out of His fulness.

Another word I would like to say. The Lord had taken up Israel, and it is beautiful to see how Caleb gives the Lord His place in respect of Israel. "If the Lord delights in us." I would like every one to have the sense of the Lord's love. When the Lord takes up the case of the people with Moses, and turns them back into the wilderness to fall there, He says, "As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with my glory." He does not give up His thought. He says, as it were, I brought Israel out of Egypt in order that through them all the earth might be filled with my glory as He will do presently, notwithstanding their failure. It is said of them prophetically, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and afterward the temple, but they were never conscious that their Jehovah was their glory, and that His presence among them was their glory and that from them the glory of Jehovah was to go out and fill the earth. It is blessed to see that the Lord will not give up His thought. Israel had to die in the wilderness, but He will not give up His thought. I see in Caleb a beautiful response to the thought of God. It is not for us to think anything of our-

selves. God forbid we should do so, when all is of His grace, but let us look on to the New Jerusalem and seek to be in the light that shines from it. The church has failed to express what is heavenly upon earth, but it is blessed to know that God never gives up His purpose, and the moment will come when the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God. The earthly people then will be in the radiance of the heavenly city. I do not think anything will be happy for this earth till it is blessed from heaven.

For many years past I have been struck with this, that when God made this earth He made a created heavens to it, and all rule and blessing for the earth is there. Now the Son is there, and the church is to be caught up there and to come out from there as the New Jerusalem. But what I want to press is that while it is blessed to be in the light of what is to come, we may seek to be faithful to the light of God as it shines for us in the Lord, faithful in the sense of the love of God to His people. How Caleb can step out and say, as it were, The Lord is everything to me! The giants are nothing! Why should I not get possession of the land? And it is interesting that the whole tribe of Judah got the bounds of their inheritance through him.

One faithful person in a meeting I believe

may give character to the whole meeting. It is *not my thought, but that of another* who has often stood here, how one man or even a woman can give entire character to a meeting. How one soul who seeks to get free from influences here and be in the light of the Lord's revelation of His purposes for His people—the light of heaven, may affect many. If we have the sense of His love to the church, I do not think we need fear falling in the wilderness but we shall be sustained in the sense of the Lord's faithful love to His own. May we be kept not only in the light of the heavenly city, but in the sense of His faithful love.

T. H. R.



CALEB.

(JOSH. XIV. 13-15.)

I HAVE read these verses briefly to refer to the portion of Caleb. It has been remarked that it is not said of him that "on the whole" he followed the Lord, but that "he *wholly* followed the Lord;" and there is a great difference between the two. Perhaps of many of us it could be said that on the whole we are following the Lord, but of Caleb it is said that "he wholly followed" Him.

It is generally believed that Caleb was a Gentile,* and it was this thought I had particu-

* As to the genealogy of Caleb, I add in a footnote that there is really no doubt that he was a Gentile. He is thrice called "Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite" (Num. xxxii. 12; Josh. xiv. 6, 14), and his "younger brother Othniel" is always styled "the son of Kenaz." (Josh. xv. 17; Judg. i. 13; iii. 9, 11.) Now Kenaz was the son of Eliphaz, an Edomite (Gen. xxxvi. 11, 15), and the Kenezites are found in Genesis xv. 19 amongst other Gentile tribes which were given under the suzerainty, so to speak, of Abraham, many of whom would be incorporated in the course of time among the tribes of Israel. Now the genealogy of Jephunneh is nowhere given; but we are told that Joshua gave Caleb

larly before my mind, and the remarkable way he comes in here as such and gets for a possession this city of Hebron as an inheritance. In chapter xx. 7 we learn that Hebron

“a part among the children of Judah” (Josh. xv. 13), and the reason for this is expressly defined “because that he wholly followed the Lord God of *Israel*.” (Josh. xiv. 14.) His progenitors had doubtless been friendly towards and perhaps followers of Israel in their wanderings, while still retaining their own tribal worship; but Caleb separated himself fully from such and identified himself *wholly* with the faith of Jehovah the God of Israel; and so marked a man was he that he was fully incorporated into the royal tribe of Judah, of which tribe he was the chosen spy (Num. xiii. 6; xiv. 6), and in which capacity he so acquitted himself that subsequently he became, under Joshua, their leader into the promised land, where he was rewarded by divine command (Josh. xv. 13) with Hebron and its surroundings as an inheritance for himself and for his family. Incorporated thus into this tribe his genealogy is ranged under the tribal head, though a comparison between Genesis xxxvi. 20-23 and 1 Chronicles ii. 50-52; iv. 1, &c., shews that there are sundry names subsequently connected with Judah which naturally derive from Esau. The genealogy may easily have been affected likewise by his marriage with a woman of the tribe of Judah. The word Caleb means ‘a dog,’ and may have reference to his Gentile origin. (Compare Matt. xv. 22-31.) *His possession in the land he retained through many generations.* (Cf. 1 Sam. xxv. 3; xxx. 14.) It was one of “the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt,” in the days when, though God’s anointed king, he was an outcast in the land. (1 Sam. xxx. 31.)

became one of the cities of refuge; and it is a striking thing that a Gentile should become possessor of such a city. Doubtless it shadows forth dimly but really the purposes of God in connection with the Gentile and the church, as witnessed likewise by such as Asenath, Zipporah, Ruth, Jethro and others, as the firstfruits of that goodly harvest that are brought into light in New Testament and in later times. In this way it becomes very interesting to see how this city of refuge falls into the possession of those who are represented in Caleb as the result of his following the Lord *wholly*.

The original name of the city was Kirjath-arba, and if you turn to Genesis xxiii. you will find how the history of the place began. In verse 2 we read that Sarah died there, and the chapter goes on to tell how Abraham purchased "the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about," because he would have a place altogether his own property, outside of the direction or interference of this world, where he could bury his dead; and in order to establish his title thereto and freedom from others in undisturbed possession, he purchased it at the full price, "current money with the merchant;" and thus, every claim being

satisfied, it was transferred to him as a burying-place—a bright witness to us of his faith in the resurrection.

Sarah was buried there. Now Sarah represents the promises of God in connection with Israel, according to the old form of the covenant under which those promises were made; and in the day when apparently all was lost, “buried out of sight,” there still remained a great future to the man of faith; everything was secured to Abraham in Hebron. Now everything is secured to us in the resurrection of Christ. All the promises of God may seem to fail, and all we trusted in be lost (Luke xxiv. 21), but all is “made sure” in Hebron, and every claim is satisfied by “current money with the merchant.” Then, and not till then, was Sarah buried in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. There, too, was Abraham buried (Gen. xxv. 9), there was Isaac buried (Gen. xxxv. 27–29), and there Jacob *commanded* his sons to bury him likewise. (Gen. l. 12, 13.) There the whole patriarchal triad “laid down in peace and slept” in the assurance that every promise was safe in the keeping of the God of resurrection. (Psa. iv. 8.) And very beautiful, as it seems to me, in the midst of the surrounding darkness, is the light from Hebron, that conducts the family of the faithful in their retirement and security

until the morning shines, when they shall come forth in the realisation of every divinely begotten hope in their souls—the cloudless morning of the resurrection! Nothing is lost, not even the fragments; and everything is not merely secured, it is magnified and glorified “according to the working of the power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

It is very remarkable that the possession of that whole field, the possession of Sarah’s burial place, and of Abraham’s and of Isaac’s and of Jacob’s, should all be in the hands of a Gentile. The burial of Sarah is immediately followed by “the call of Rebekah” (Gen. xxiv.), the bride of the resurrection Man, as Eleazar conducts her across the wilderness to meet him. And the church now has a wonderful place as connected with a heavenly Christ in the day of His rejection here in this world, and as waiting till He comes, in whom her hope is, a hope in Him which she keeps burning all the night of Israel’s unbelief, who, like the unfaithful spies, never enter into the land, while Caleb-like she “wholly follows the Lord,” and becomes the custodian now of the hopes of Israel, and their leader by-and-by into the brightest light that will shine for them in all the brightness of the millennial day. (Rev. xxi., xxii.)

I only had these few remarks before my mind

as connected with what has already been before us. Israel's hope, lost by them through unfaithfulness and unbelief, is secured in the church. It is an immense cheer meanwhile that we can wholly and unreservedly follow Him, until by-and-by we see His face. May we have grace to set our faces at least in that direction. Amen.

E. C.



READING.

FRUIT-BEARING AND WITNESS.

(JOHN XV.)

F. H. B. You said that the two thoughts in the chapter were fruit-bearing and witness.

F. E. R. Yes. It is important to see both what is from God, and what is for God. Fruit is for God. Witness is from God, and what is *for* God is almost more important than what is from God.

F. H. B. You once said that fruit-bearing is the evidence of vitality.

F. E. R. Yes, that is the point in the chapter.

T. H. R. Would you not say that fruit-bearing is really the continuation of Christ down here, and witness is to an absent One?

F. H. B. That is very important—that in fruit-bearing Christ is continued down here in His people.

F. E. R. There could not be fruit-bearing till Christ was here. He must of necessity be the beginning of it, for there could not be any till the ground for it was there.

The point in the chapter is that Christ is the

true vine, and this in a sense in contrast to Israel. Till Christ came there was no ground for the vine, the roots must be in the ground. Christ is the real beginning of all fruit-bearing.

W. B. Was there not fruit for God in the Old Testament saints ?

F. E. R. I do not think that we find in them exactly the idea of fruit.

H. T. "*In me.*" How far does "every branch in me" go ?

F. E. R. It referred to the moment in which Christ was speaking. He was the true vine, and there were branches in Him in that way, there were branches in which were no vitality. We cannot apply these earlier verses now, for Christ is no longer here as the vine, but the absence of Christ does not preclude the thought of fruit-bearing, though we have not the vine.

F. C. Could there not be fruit according to their dispensation in the Old Testament saints ?

F. E. R. I think fruit is in connection with a circle, or company, or people. It involved a company. Israel as a people was expected to bear fruit, and in the time of their restoration they will bear it. Now there is fruit in the christian company. In the Old Testament there was faith, and fruit of a kind, but hardly fruit according to the idea here. Fruit is the evidence of a healthy vitality. We do not get the

thought as it is here save in connection with a company.

G. G. Is fruit Christ expressed ?

F. E. R. I think it goes to the *source*, it is *God* expressed. God took up a people, a nation. He took a vine out of Egypt and planted it ; but it did not bear fruit. Christ took up the position, He became the vine, and the church is the continuation of it. When Christ was here fruit was connected with association with Christ, and now we get fruit for God in the church. Fruit comes out in our relations with one another.

QUES. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Is not that individual ?

F. E. R. I do not see that it is individual ; the passage describes one of a company. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness—and these things come out in relation to one another in a company. I cannot see how they can come out in any other way. There may be the capability for it in the individual, but it is what is to characterise the *company*.

A. C. Cannot love and peace come out in an individual ?

F. E. R. I do not exclude the importance of individuality in connection with fruit, but I

think God is looking to the company for fruit—just as He did in Israel.

W. B. When you say the company, how many are embraced, is it only the church?

F. E. R. It is the company upon which Christ looks. In connection with fruit-bearing I look upon myself as part of a whole, and keep myself in connection with the whole.

G. G. Is it the church?

F. E. R. Yes.

W. B. Suppose I as an individual break down and do not bring forth all these beautiful things, am I to judge myself individually?

F. E. R. Yes, we have to look to ourselves individually. I need to take heed to myself so that I may properly carry out my relation to the whole. It is important that we should carry out our responsibility in relation to the whole.

T. H. R. A great deal of the break down is because we are not true to the company.

QUES. What is it to abide in Him?

F. E. R. It involves the practical setting aside of self. It implies living in Christ's life and is accompanied with the sense of one's own incompetency.

QUES. Would it be dependence?

F. E. R. Yes; but dependence must be accompanied by abiding in Christ. You have to turn from everything else to Him. You derive

nothing from natural ground. Christ has to be everything. The force and energy all lies in Christ Himself. The ground is the important point.

F. H. B. What is the ground ?

F. E. R. The real ground is the *revelation* of God. The true secret and spring of all fruit-bearing is, that God is revealed. Christ may be, and is the manifestation of it.

F. H. B. Rooted and grounded in love ?

F. E. R. Yes ; but how could you be that, if you were not in the light of the revelation of God ?

QUES. Did the disciples bear fruit when Christ was here ?

F. E. R. Yes ; they came under the culture and discipline of the Father.

F. H. B. What is "purging" ?

F. E. R. It is the hand of the Father, subjecting the saints to circumstances which would discover to them things which would be hindrances to fruit-bearing.

E. C. Young trees have to be transplanted so that the head should not grow out of proportion to the root.

QUES. How do you apply that ?

F. E. R. *You* have to be constantly transplanted. The Father exercises and disciplines.

QUES. Is that the chastening we get in Hebrews xii.?

F. E. R. Yes.

W. B. That in Hebrews xii. is *very* individual.

F. E. R. Yes; but then the company is made up of individuals. It is essential that all who compose the company should be morally right; the faith of the company is the faith of the individuals. Every individual has to walk in the sense of relationship to the company.

W. M. What is fruit for which reward is given?

F. E. R. Reward is given for service. Fruit-bearing must not be confounded with service; they are two distinct things. Fruit-bearing is spontaneous, and is the evidence and outcome of vitality, and is the *result* of *culture*. It is often through suffering, and it is not the idea of service.

F. H. B. Service is more towards man, while fruit is for God.

F. E. R. The object of service is man, though in a sense it is for God. Fruit is always for God. We only get fruit as we are rooted and grounded in love.

A. S. L. Is this not fruit—"That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again." Is that it?

F. E. R. That is the *way* of it. If the soul has the revelation of God in love, fruit must correspond with it. Hence the fruit of the Spirit is love. . . . Being rooted and grounded in love could not be till God was revealed. Christ was the beginning of it. Israel ought to have responded to the goodness and care of God for them in thankfulness and praise. They did not, so you do not get fruit-bearing until Christ came.

REMARKED. There was not true humanity till then—the living bread come down heaven.

QUES. What then is that in the Old Testament, “From me is thy fruit found”?

F. E. R. That is prophetic of a *future* day, and then *God* will be the source of it. There will be fruit for God from Israel then, but meantime you get the fruits of righteousness which are *by Jesus Christ*. Old Testament saints were men of faith. I always feel that Abraham was a man incomparably beyond myself, but I think that *fruit-bearing* depended on *life* coming in, and that depended on the revelation of God. Life is dependent upon light. The natural order is first light, then life, then fruit-bearing.

QUES. Would not the Old Testament saints be beyond the day in which they lived?

F. E. R. Yes, as far as God wrought in them. All the previous dealings of God were in antici-

pation of what was about to come. Every revelation of God in the Old Testament was in the way of some characteristic or attribute, but that was not making *Himself* known in His nature.

W. B. Not the *full* revelation.

F. E. R. When Christ the only-begotten Son came, who dwells in the bosom of the Father, *He* declared Him, and I defy any one to understand any of the names by which God had made Himself known—Jehovah, for instance—except in the light of the revelation of God.

D. L. H. Say more about that.

F. E. R. Well, "Almighty," "Jehovah," &c., were all titles or names which had reference to attributes or characteristics of God, and to understand these you must get the revelation of God as come out in Christ.

D. L. H. Why?

F. E. R. There were moral hindrances to His doing so to be met and overcome. God might have proved Himself almighty by raising every man to judgment, but what good would that have been to man as regards God making Himself known? What meaning has God in making Himself known to man now? What had He then? It was in love, but the light of this came out in Christ.

W. B. What is the force of "I am the Almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect"?

F. E. R. 'Almighty' refers to the power of God as shewn in resurrection. I think Abraham was to have confidence in God in the power of resurrection, but resurrection to life entirely depended on God revealing Himself in love, and could not be except through the coming out of God in the Son. The Son of God came forth and declared God, and in the light of the declaration of God you can understand any name by which God had made Himself known previously. All was obscure in Old Testament times, but Christ is the answer to all that was obscure then.

REMARKED. And so we get all the good of these names ?

F. E. R. Yes, the Son having come out, in the light of that declaration you can understand every name though the contemporaries could not ; and by-and-by in the millennium Israel will have the good of every name in which God has come out.

T. H. R. All the first part of chapter xv. is connected with chapter xiv. In chapter xiv. the Spirit is sent by the Father to bring to the remembrance of the disciples everything that Christ was here for God. Chapter xv. follows on that ; and is a continuation of Christ here in the disciples—really in the Christian company.

W. B. Why use the term "company" in con-

connection with this subject instead of "assembly"?

T. H. R. Paul's use of the word assembly conveys a *corporate* idea. John does not speak of the "assembly," but he presents a company, and it is a most important thing to get hold of, that there is a company down here which Christ owns as His own, marked off from the world, the church—the *assembly* if you like, only it is not so spoken of in John. Christ calls that company "*My assembly.*"

QUES. Does not the term "disciples" mean a company in moral accord with Christ—those who have learnt of Christ?

T. H. R. Yes. The only place where a soul really grows is in the assembly. I am *sure* of that; I am not saying God does not work where an individual is in a place of isolation.

F. H. B. How can fruit-bearing be realised now since the company is all broken up and scattered?

T. H. R. We have got the Head and the Spirit. Thus if only half a dozen persons are gathered together by the Spirit they might hold the Head.

QUES. What do you mean, Mr. R., by saying, we only grow in the assembly?

T. H. R. Because the assembly is the home of divine affections, and it is as knit together in

love that there is growth with the increase of God—that is, the divine nature.

F. E. R. We do not touch the truth of the assembly until we begin to practice it.

W. B. You mean that only those who are in the truth of the assembly really grow?

F. H. B. Well, who else do?

F. E. R. We left system because we felt we could not grow there.

W. B. But you grew *out* of it.

F. E. R. It was really the goodness of the Lord in shewing one how restricted one was. I do not think people grow in what you may call Judaised Christianity.

T. H. R. “They that be *planted in the house* of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall be fat and flourishing and bring forth fruit in old age.” I think it is a great thing when we are planted. There are many among us in the meeting who are not planted in the house of God. People go to a place and seek a meeting, but the Lord’s house is not the great thought with them—that the assembly is more their home than their own home.

W. B. How do you bring about what it should be?

T. H. R. First it is a great thing to see that Christ has down here a *company* which He *loves*. I cannot have Christ personally now. If He

were here we would all like to go to where He was. But we can go where the saints are gathered to His name, and that is where we grow in divine affections. There are those who *are* planted in the house of God, and they grow there; others just come and go and keep their heads above water, but to those who are planted there it is the home of their heart.

W. B. But you must embrace all Christians in the company.

T. H. R. You must follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. I would embrace them, but I would not go out after them. I think if the company were more expressive of divine affections, and if such qualities as meekness, gentleness and care for others were apparent, there would be more attraction. J. B. S. used to say we ought to be attractive. Any servant of the Lord who was ministering the truth would find it a great thing to be able to bring souls to a company where all these qualities which are according to God were to be seen. How are you to shew meekness, long-suffering and all that, unless you have the company?

F. E. R. The Lord makes a great deal of it in this chapter—"Love one another." After all, we have to remember that the witness here is a living witness, and there is no power if there is

no witness. Witness is not preaching, it is more moral. The witness of the Spirit is not preaching. No preacher in the present day can really be a witness in himself; he has nothing to witness to, because he has not been with the Lord from the beginning or seen Him. The Holy Ghost is witness, for He has come down from Christ on high and He is the power of the witness in the company. The witness of the Spirit is moral. The effect and power of the Spirit in the company is the witness.

W. G. B. Do you use the expression witness in the sense of eye-witness?

F. E. R. That is how it is used in this chapter. Paul was a witness, the twelve were witnesses, and the Spirit is the witness to Christ in glory; but no man at the present time can be witness in this sense. The Spirit is witness through the company. It is the power and effect of the Spirit in the company of those who obey God. That is the way we "hold forth the word of life." No one man can witness at the present time. A witness witnesses of what he knows and has seen. In John iii. 11 the Lord says, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

A. S. L. What is "the testimony of our Lord" in Timothy?

F. E. R. What Paul committed in testimony

to Timothy to pass down, and we have that testimony still, but we are not in the position of the apostles. We have received what the apostles witnessed of, we have also the Spirit as Witness. He is witnessing, and that is the great stand-by for us. If you have not that, I do not know what you have. The Spirit brings in the power of life, and it is in connection with life that you get the witness of the Spirit. "This is the witness, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." There is nothing more important than the apprehension of the truth that there is a witness here. I do not know what Christianity can stand on without the witness—the Spirit; without that it would be tradition.

A. S. L. In France when they come into fellowship they speak of it as "joining the testimony." Is that a right thought?

F. E. R. All depends on whether they are right morally. If they were all in the life of Christ, they would be a testimony. Mr. Darby used to say, that if brethren were a testimony to anything it was to the ruin of the church; but if all were morally in the life of Christ there would be a testimony to Christ.

QUES. What is having the witness in himself?

F. E. R. That is the work of the Spirit. "He

that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. . . . And this is the witness, that God hath given us eternal life." "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Men are rendered responsible to recognise the witness which God has given, and if the witness is not accepted, they make God a liar.

W. B. If that company who witness fail, would my faith be shaken ?

F. E. R. No; your faith would not rest on the witness, it would go to God, for the witness is concerning His Son.

QUES. Is not the written word the ground of faith ?

F. E. R. God is the ground of faith, God revealed, for then faith rests on what God is, on the revelation of God in Christ. The record is not the ground of faith. Christ is the Word. The scriptures are of all importance, because all is now established in Christ, and they are the divinely-given record.

REMARKED. The Thessalonians received the testimony as the word of God.

F. E. R. It came in such power that they recognised it was the word. They had not the scriptures.

QUES. Had they not the word of God in Old Testament times ?

F. E. R. The word of God never came to

them by scripture, it came to them by Moses or the prophets ; it comes to us by Christ, and is continued to us—substantiated to us—by the Spirit. God hath spoken in the last days in the Son. All this period is characterised to us as God speaking to us in the Son, and is continued to us by the Spirit. God had spoken, and what He spoke had got its place in the world before the scriptures were written. God had spoken in the Son. The testimony of God was there before the scriptures were written. It was given by living witnesses and received in the power of the Spirit before the written record was possible. What people do not understand is the meaning of the expression the *word of God*.

F. H. B. You cannot say that scripture is “living and operative” in the soul. The word of God is.

QUES. Can the revelation come to *us* except through the scriptures ?

F. E. R. The present day is characterised as the period when God has spoken to us by the Son. He has come down and spoken. God has spoken in the Son, and what He has said has been confirmed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The scriptures are the record, and they carry authority, and cannot be broken. Anybody can appeal to the scripture, and if any one contravenes the letter he is guilty ; but

nothing can make scripture more than the letter, nothing alters the divine position as to the present period, that is, God has spoken to us by the *Son*, and He can speak to us by no other, and the Holy Ghost down here confirms what God has said, but He does not add to it. The point is that the word of God is Christ, and Christianity was established on the earth before the New Testament scriptures were written. Christianity is not dependent on scripture, it is dependent on what God has established in Christ and on the Spirit being down here. God has spoken by the Son, it is confirmed to us by the Spirit, and so continued to us.

QUES. What is the use of scripture to us ?

F. E. R. It is for doctrine and is a guard to us, and it is a very important point in regard to it that our minds are thus kept from getting out of bounds.

W. B. The unsearchable riches of Christ are accorded to us by the scriptures.

F. E. R. No ; you cannot get them except by the Spirit. God speaks to man in different ways—to Abraham by promises, to Moses on Mount Sinai, or from the mercy seat, and then to Israel by the prophets, and now the climax is reached—God has spoken by His Son. The idea of the "*word of God*," is, that God puts Himself into direct communication with man. Hence it has

a moral character because God is speaking. Now He has spoken by the Son, and this is characteristic of the present period. A man preaches effectually only what he has learned from God, not from what he has found in scripture.

D. L. H. What is, "Have an outline of sound words." Does not scripture give an outline?

F. E. R. No. Different epistles were written to different people, and to assemblies in different conditions, and if you want to have it in form it must be by the Holy Ghost in the soul. So, too, different accounts are given of Christ's ministry. There are four different accounts in the four gospels. If all were put together in one you could not hold them in your soul in distinction, you have to get them moulded as one in your soul by the Spirit.

D. L. H. What is the force of "outline" in that case?

F. E. R. That they should not be lying about in fragments in your mind, but be in form that you may be able to use them. What scripture says about itself is, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." I cannot get a better statement as to the purpose of scripture than that. It is our answer to the enemy, as the word in that way carries authority.

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST.

(2 COR. v. 9-15.)

I DESIRE, dear brethren, to say a few words on the love of Christ. What we have had before us is the spring of it all, and there is the realisation of it in ourselves. I ask you to turn to 2 Corinthians v. 9-15.

In verse 14 the love of Christ is presented as the real constraining power for the Christian; the practical difficulty is to understand it, to enter into it, and in even a small measure, to realise it.

In the scripture I have read the judgment-seat of Christ is before us, and an appearance there cannot be avoided. To live in the current of the things which are according to the course of this world is altogether inconsistent for the Christian, and whilst the love of Christ in bearing sins is well known, the love that would carry our souls from that stage right on to the judgment-seat, and be the means of our being 'acceptable' to Him *now*, with untold blessing at the judgment-seat, is not so much welcomed. For the last-mentioned operation of love to be welcome the soul must

yield to the teaching of scripture as being the mind of God towards me for blessing. Scripture presents the love of Christ to us as the constraining power over the soul when we arrive at a view of ourselves which puts us morally in the place of death; it presents this to us and presses it upon us in order to open to us the true meaning, and the effect, for the believer, of the death of Christ, so that the constraining power of His love may take the place of the old disobedience in us and become to us the spring, as He is the source for us, of a life for God here. We do not arrive at this or apprehend it in a legal manner, but in holy and happy liberty we are privileged to accept the sentence of death in ourselves in order that the love of Christ may flow unhindered in us, and that this love may fit us for the enjoyment of and living in the things that are new and are of God.

We have to accept the great fact that we are morally dead and incapable of bringing forth fruit to God. We have to look the truth in the face—to let it *lay hold* of us. The words to which I call your attention are these: “Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” A solemn conclusion had been arrived at. Those classed in the “*we*” had faced the question. It was not in any sense a future thing; a *present* judgment had been

arrived at; it was a judgment which confessed (for it had been proved) that man—the Christian down here—has no power of himself to act for God, no ability really to bring forth anything for God, in his own power or his own strength. That is undoubtedly necessary for us to learn if we would avail ourselves of what scripture presents to us as proper Christian life. We must not shrink from the consequences of the judgment which we have to come to, that is, that we have no natural capacity to bring forth anything for God. Self-will is strong in us, the determination to carry things through is inherent in us, but it is inconsistent with the judgment at which the apostle arrives, and to which judgment the love of Christ constrains us. That love is the effective force which sets those whom it constrains upon a pathway to bring forth fruit to God. Christ is the spring and source of all that is precious to God on earth, and it is perfected in the souls of His people here according as the *present* love of His Son in glory moulds our lives. Christianity clears us out of the way morally in order that each one of us may thus judge, as it says here, “if one died for all, then were all dead; that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” On the ground of His death

allegiance is now claimed as belonging to the One who has wrought that great work for God which has placed us upon the foundation of Christ Himself. Now it is "to Him" that we are to live.

A soul might say, But how is this to be? The first step is to come to a judgment according to the mind of the Spirit as set forth here as to yourself in order that the power of the Spirit may be unhindered, constraining you, by the love of Christ, to be altogether for Him, that He may work and perfect in your soul that which is precious to God, that you may come out here and bring forth what is characteristic of Christ Himself. We live to Him who died for us and rose again.

I turn now to a passage in 1 Corinthians xiii., reading verses 4-11, to call attention to the love of Christ in us. That which is natural will produce nothing for God; but this divine love, which is to be set forth in the Christian down here, spoken of here as "charity," is of that character which begins by making nothing of you, in order that fruit may be brought forth in you. If the love of Christ is to constrain you it is to confirm you in the judgment which you have already formed of yourself; and is to carry you along (as "those that live") by living to Him. According to our measure we are to represent

Him; that which marked Him on earth is to mark us. "Love suffereth long and is kind," &c. There is often a misconception about love. I feel sure that the first action of love is to make nothing of yourself. A great deal is said about love to one another, but I am sure it *begins* by making nothing of yourself. "Love vaunteth not itself." You are to be down in a place where you can be the servant to the assembly and to men; you are to take the place that belongs to you, that the love of Christ may constrain in the assembly, and it would do so if you have come to the end of yourself, and are free to be the expression of what you receive. Every line of this scripture shews that you are made nothing of, yet in being nothing you are shewing that His love is power in you.

Whatever opposition is presented to you in your path here, you are to meet it in that spirit. The old "I" is not to assert its own will; it is morally dead before God, in order that you may meet every opposition in the spirit of Christ and in the character of the love that is from Him to you. If the lesson is learned in any measure, then you really begin to set forth the traits of Christ towards others, shewing that you have been divinely taught. You are able to do it because you have no purpose to serve of your own; no secret belief in yourself;

you believe in the living God. That which you have found in Christ has become so real to you that you can sweep aside the paltry things which would make a person great in his own eyes, that that which is of Christ might shine out in him. In that wonderful company, the assembly, you are now in a condition to be used of God for a help and blessing to others.

“Love doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own,” &c. Nothing of that sort. Every natural advantage is refused and the love of Christ constrains us in the exercise of the very best gift; the gift and the love work together for the good of all. Just in proportion as the love of Christ brings you down to nothing, you bear fruit to God. Christ is the spring and source; you are the subject of His constraining love by the Spirit, and what is accomplished is fruit for God. That which is of Christ is displayed before Him and gives pleasure to Him. It speaks to God of what His Son was here (one speaks with all reverence), and His love is so wrought out in the power of the Spirit, and so constrains you, that Christ is expressed in you, for the Spirit has no standard short of Christ. See how it touches you in regard to the judgment-seat: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.” How we shall rejoice at the judgment-seat when we find that conformity

to Christ in the effacing of oneself according to 1 Corinthians xiii. has been the means of rivers of living water flowing out. It will bring forth untold joy there. What joy it is now to find one and another separated from the course of things which would otherwise have ordinarily occupied one, and what is of Christ in relation to one another brought out. Love will not allow you to push your rights or your will, for it "suffereth long, and is kind." Why should you leave things to be brought up at the judgment-seat of Christ that could be settled here on earth? Love settles them here. Nature does not, but rather finds satisfaction in the thought that God punishes. The "terror of the Lord" is a most solemn word. Can I, a Christian, act so unforgivingly that a sin is kept alive, or so carelessly that I stumble or cause wrong to another? Does not love cause me to examine my own past and to hasten to repair every injury?

Let me put it in another way. All that which is fruit for God will have its place at the judgment-seat; that which has been of the Spirit's operation in your soul will prove to have been of account in that day. The blessedness is this—Christ took upon Himself that which in strict justice should have been visited upon us; you can in like manner do so

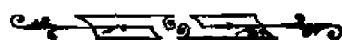
towards others. It is like Christ to do so. How much better to have it judged *here* that it may not come up in the same way *there*.

You may say, Am I always to be sat upon? Am I always to be nobody? Am I always to give up my rights? Let it be so. If you are nothing in your own eyes as you are before God, the love of Christ is surely sufficient in order that another may be relieved and blessed. If your love seeks that another may be blessed, do not suppose it will be of no account before God. We have to take the place of death with Christ. What heart could be lifted up with pride in the presence of His love?

“Love vaunteth not itself, is not easily provoked.” What delight to see others blessed—spared perhaps from wrong things coming before them, or from some mistake, which no one knows anything about. To put it right may cost you something, but if the love of Christ constrains you, you *will* put it right; you will not go amongst others in such a manner as to hurt them—to bring out what is latent there—to bring out that which ought not to come under the eye of God. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.” How blessed it is to find the love of Christ constraining us, filling us in this way, and the Spirit maintaining us with great support. We read of the work of faith and labour of love. It is

the love that will colour the work in that day and that colours the course now. It is derived from Christ. He is the spring and source of it, and may we, by the grace of God, seek the realisation of it, and so apply it that what was characteristic of Him may be found in us, that we may seek the prosperity of others. The best gifts, the understanding of mysteries, all knowledge and even all faith, are to be subordinated to charity which covers a multitude of sins, and which, when in exercise, is leading us to become Christ's bondsmen, a path of service open to all, but not always remembered; walking in it we do not live unto ourselves. Truly to abide in Him is to bring forth fruit. May the Lord be pleased to grant it! that we may be enabled to say in spirit, Let self be out of sight that others may be blessed and filled with the love of Christ—that the love of Christ may reign in them more fully than it reigns in my own heart to the glory of God by Jesus Christ.

J. A.



“YOU.”

(JOHN XV. 14-16.)

THE subject of interest in these verses, dear to my own heart and to many, I trust to all here, is embraced in that little word “you.” It may be called by different names—such as the company, the flock, the assembly, or the body—but we all know what that “you” means, and that little company is privileged beyond all others. There never has been one so highly favoured, and never will be again. They are a very special and privileged people. I do not say you can point out that company now and say—there it is, but still it is here, and, thank God, we know it is. They have what no other company has or ever will have as far as scripture shews us. They are marked in a wonderful way—they love one another. It is the only company on earth of which that can be said. Till that company was formed there never had been an assembly marked by love to one another. The Lord spoke to them on that last night of what was to characterise them in His absence; when He spoke to them

of love and joy He meant what He said. No doubt He saw that company coming out in all the beauty of Christ, and the Father getting fruit for Himself from them. He saw it beforehand, and told them what it was the Father would value. Nothing of Christ was to be lost. The love which He brought into the world was to remain, it was not to be lost. It was to be in that company, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." It is special to it. As to *where* you can find such a company now, it may be difficult to say, but its unfailing mark is love—they love one another. That love does not belong to nor find its proper scope in any sect, nor could it. The very fact of a sect means that they who form it have a creed of their own, their own tenets, and their own rules by which they are bound together. It is not the great moral bond of divine love. *That* belongs only to that company which Christ has brought out of the world for the Father and which the Father has given to the Son. The point to me is not where we can see that love, but that we should seek to shew it, that we should seek in the power of the Spirit to manifest that love which is characteristic of the company—it is fruit for God.

Another thing that marks them is, they have *His joy*. "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." When Christ

was here joy was here. There never had been such joy on earth or joy so deep till then. The world did not know what He had, but He had it, there was a deep, wonderful spring of joy in Him, and it was to continue. So two things mark that company according to the mind of God, and did at the beginning—they love one another and have the joy of Christ. “My joy,” a deep spring of joy altogether outside this world. They *love one another*; it is not that they love those who have the same tastes as themselves, nor those who hold to certain principles as in a man-made community—“they love one another.” The world would not thank you for love like that—divine love. The Lord brought it here, and the world did not appreciate it, nor want it, but the saints prize it. It is very precious now. There was plenty of it seen at Pentecost, but it is precious now—too precious in a way, there is so little of it. If you want to find love and joy you will not find it anywhere, but in that “you,” that company which Christ has got for Himself. And what can be more attractive than love and joy !

There is another thing that marks that company—they are extremely *wealthy*. “All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” It is well worth belonging to that company to get such things; they are

nowhere else—the Jew has not got them, the heathen has not, nor were they given to any sect. It is a person in the light of the assembly who gets what is true of the assembly, and enjoys what belongs to it. It is a great thing to get the light of the “one flock,” the one company. What communications can equal what Christ heard of His Father? and He has deposited these communications in the assembly. No creed can contain them. These things were deposited among His own, the “you.” “All things which I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” The more you get into the light of the assembly the more you get into the light of these communications. I would not go to a sectarian to open out the Father’s things. If I knew any one in the consciousness of what the assembly is I am sure he would open out to me these communications of the Father more than any sectarian could. And these treasures are never *lost*—they are kept here in the power of the Spirit. These communications are still here, no thanks to us, but thanks to the power of the Spirit. They are not lost, they are maintained here, and as people get into the power and light of the assembly they find them. They find the most blessed things that could possibly be told out.

And then, dear friends, it is a *praying* com-

pany. “Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” (Chap. xvi. 23.) They have a peculiar access to the Father, a privilege that belongs to no other assembly on earth. What a wonderful thing it must have been to hear that company pray at the beginning! They were not selfish prayers—praying for anything of their own—they had nothing of their own. The Lord gives these blessed things to His own. The more you are in the light of the assembly the more you know how to pray. Prayer is more in accord with the mind of God, and with the Father’s heart as we know what that “you” is. Are you going to narrow that “you” to any special party? You cannot; nor can you, on the other hand, enlarge it to take in what is not of Christ. What a wonderful company the assembly is! They are a people who know love and joy, and who have communications from the Father, and who pray with the certainty that it is the pleasure of God to receive their petitions. There is only one company on earth who address the Father, and who are certain of the Father’s hearing them, and that is the company who are the continuation of Christ down here—His own assembly, His own body.

But along with these privileges they must expect hatred on the part of the world. The people who *love* are the people who are *hated*.

The world is a universal idea. They are the object of universal hatred. In other things the world can find something to like or to patronise; they can patronise religion; but this assembly has nothing in it attractive to the world, or which the world could be the patron of, nor does the assembly in any way desire the world's patronage. The world hates them because they are like Christ and chosen by Him out of the world. It is not the first instance of universal hatred, but the continuation of what was shewn to Christ Himself; they are still hated by the same world. But, strange to say, though they hate that company the world greatly gains by its being here.

Then they are a *witnessing* company. It was a blessed witness at the first that came out from that great evangelistic company, for they were all evangelistic then, and would to God there was the same blessed witness now! In their love to one another they were the great testimony to the love of God. No man can get into the light of the company without being evangelistic. It is like being in the light of the sun. How could you be in the light of God's love and having got that light be unaffected by it? The world is the gainer when the moon catches the light of the sun and reflects it, and so the witness of the company is a gain to the world just in propor-

tion as the church is in the light of Christ, and as His love is manifested in us. The gospel was successful in the most marvellous way in the beginning because of the testimony that came out from the “you.”

Then another thing: it is a company that is *persecuted*; they follow you up, they want to get rid of you, and the persecution is more particularly from those who think they are doing God service; they persecute that company.

Then again, I do not believe any one knows the true character of the world like the man who is in the truth of the assembly. Who can tell you the character of the world except the church? The world could not tell it you—the only ones who could are those in Christ’s company, the “you.” The Spirit has come, and He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. More than that, they are *in the light of things to come*—they see the things of the world passing away and they are in the light of the world to come—they see all the elements of the world gathered up in its prince, and passing away, and they are in the glorious light of what is coming. To no other company is the light of the world to come given.

Then they are a *rejoicing* company—they have a joy which no man taketh from them.

But they do not rejoice in the same circumstances which the world rejoices in: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." The church has no joy which it shares with the world. When the world has a high day the church does not put out its flag, for what the world exults in the church does not. The church exults in Christ. It is true still; that joy was given 1800 years ago, and it remains—the joy of seeing One risen from the dead, the joy of seeing all the pleasure of God in Christ, the accomplisher of all God's purposes of blessing and the centre and sun of the great world to come.

There is just one other thing more I would mention which we get in a previous chapter—the world thinks we are *orphans*. The world saw a dead Christ, and His followers without Him. But wonderful to say, though bereaved we are not bereaved. It is the only case of bereavement where we have the One of whom we are bereaved. That company, so truly blessed, knows what it is to have the presence of Christ, "I will come to you." They come together in His name and under the impulse of His love, and He comes to them. If we are conscious of being in the assembly, we are certainly conscious that He is there. He cannot be separated from His own

assembly. The world and the church have nothing in common and they cannot rejoice together. No doubt the world will rejoice when we are gone; the assembly has been an impediment to them—they want their own man, the "man of sin." When we are gone there will be no impediment to his being revealed. Jesus says to us: "I will come again and receive you unto myself." It will then be found that nothing that was left here of Christ was really lost. We have till He comes the light of the Father's house, love, fulness of joy, all the Father's communications—everything which the Lord brought and left here. Though in great failure outwardly, it will be found that all the Lord brought here has been preserved in the power of the Spirit—love, joy, and the light of the Father's things will all be found in His own when Christ comes for them. He will not come for any special party, but for that same company who are marked by love and have this deep spring of joy. Then they will expect nothing more, everything is fulfilled, they have got all the "things to come"—they have come. The world has passed, and He brings in all that which the church now is in the light of!

May the Lord give us to see it! I wish I could speak of it! It is very dear to me. I trust I would rather lose my life than lose the

light of that company. Let us see how dear it is to God, and then it will be dearer to us. Evangelists will not be less evangelists because they are in the light of the greatest thing that God has ever brought about down here.

H. D'A. C.



SEPARATION OF HEART TO CHRIST.

(JOHN XV. 3.)

I DO not know that I can add much more to what has been spoken, but I would like to say what the Lord presses upon me in connection with this verse, "already YE are clean through the word which I have spoken unto YOU." Upon it seems to me to hang the whole truth of the company, the "you" which has been so set before us just now. Throughout John's gospel I think we have, not the question of forgiveness of sins—the relief of the conscience, though these must be known, but how God works in the Son, in sovereign power, to bring to light His elect which are in the world, and carries them to the full purpose of God ; how He brings to the Father those that the Father had given to the Son. Very much is attributed therefore to the elect company which it is clear they were not actually in the good of in themselves because the Spirit had not been given. For us, however, what is spoken and done by the Lord challenges

our hearts as to how far in our souls' experience we have been carried by the Son towards the Father, as we consider each stage of John's gospel. In chapter xii. the Lord has uttered His last cry in the world, and in chapter xiii. He is outside the world and with His disciples—those who have taken that place and companied with Him during His testimony on earth—and is shewing them in parable the separating power which His death would have upon them from the scene He Himself has just left. He is in figure washing their feet with the separating water of His death applied by the hands of divine love. This is the "word" (the living testimony to divine love in His pathway down here unto death) which, if we have ears to hear, really separates our feet from this scene, which by that "word" gets its true character to our hearts. The same test of divine love, attested by the death of Christ, is applied to Judas as to the eleven, but the result in his case is only to manifest the darkness that was in his heart, which a three and a half years outward companionship with Christ had not dispelled, because there was no work of God in him—he was proved no "heir of salvation," no "child of wisdom," but the "son of perdition" (chap. xvii. 12) and he must "go out." Idolatry was there because covetousness (the principle which

governs the world) was there, and his idol filled his heart to the exclusion of the true God—the Father made known in the Son. *We* can surely understand, however, how deeply, how profoundly touched the eleven must have been at the death of Christ. *Then* their feet were actually washed because their hearts were deeply affected. *He* had died whose company down here had been everything to them; they had lacked nothing because *HE* had been with them. Their hearts had been cleansed by faith (Acts xv. 9) in Him—by attachment to His Person (not so Judas); and now *He* had gone, their hearts were bereaved, were orphaned; they were weeping and lamenting while the world was rejoicing. (Chap. xvi. 20.) What a different pathway to that of the world were *THEIR* feet treading! They were realising, without having any scriptural terms for it, what it was to be in the world yet not of it, because the faith of their hearts was under the power of the living and operative “word” of God. Mary Magdalene in chapter xx. is a true exponent of this state wrought by the death of Christ. Christ’s death was no mere relief to her; she had not the forgiveness of her sins before her mind though they *were* forgiven and the seven demons *had* gone; but *HE* had gone and *SHE* was desolate. God’s love in the death of His Son had washed her

feet. She had heard the voice of the Son of God, while others had heard not the voice of Him that spake to her.

But this brings me to my point in John xv. 3. The disciples' feet were washed in chapter xiii., not only that they might be separated from this scene, but separated to have part with Him in the scene where He was going.

Judas' feet had been washed; but his heart, as we have seen, gave no entrance to the love of God declared in the pathway of the Son unto death (the "word" applied had not reached him, for it was not mixed with faith), and he went to His own "place." (Acts i. 25.) Was there to be no "place" for the soles of the feet of the eleven? No "place" for *them* to walk in? No retreat for *their* hearts? It is this "place" made for them by His entry there as Man that the Lord begins to unfold to them in chapter xiv. as the future home of their hearts, and tells them that they were not to remain in an orphaned state, for He would come to them to conduct them in spirit there where He was to be known as in the Father, and they in Him and He in them. (Chap. xiv. 20.) They were to tread in spirit, as a company in His company and led of Him, the courts that He was going to tread in actuality, and thus to know the hope of glory—the mystery—which would be the power for fruit godward,

and for testimony manward, truths which are unfolded in chapters xv. and xvi.

Thus their hearts had been cleansed *from* the world by the word of the truth in chapter xiii., and conducted *to* the Father by the word of the truth presented in chapter xiv., and the Lord could then (speaking of things which were not as though they were, and looking on the fields, which had yet actually to ripen into fruit, as white already to harvest), in chapter xv. 3, say, "*Already* are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

The word of the Father had been given them, and, in the language of Luke xv., the robe, ring, shoes, and fatted calf had been presented to them for their hearts' appropriation to await the coming of the Spirit to conduct them into conscious sonship.

All this could be built up in their hearts because the Father had been glorified on earth by the Son as man, and the Son had been glorified as man with the Father; righteousness had been accomplished on earth, and righteousness had found its subsisting expression in heaven. The truth as to God had been made known on the earth (chap. xvii. 17), and the mind of God as to man had been established in heaven. (Chap. xvii. 19.)

These few words were what was on my heart

to say. May each one of our hearts increasingly take in the blessing, and so be more delivered from the spirit of Judas, which, in ourselves, is ever so ready to betray Him; and also from the spirit of Simon (son of Jonas), which is equally so ready in us to deny Him.

W. H. Br.



CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE.

(JOHN VIII. 12-29.)

I HAVE no doubt, beloved friends, that what we have brought out in this part of John is more "the truth." We read in chapter i. that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and I think from chapter vii. onward we see more especially that "the truth" came by Him. He is not now dealing with one and another individually, or using certain circumstances to develop the gift of God and the grace which was there; but we read in chapter vii., "He went up into the temple and taught." He was teaching, and it was the *truth* specially that brought out the enmity of the Jews, not so much the *grace*. The moment the truth came out, their hearts were manifested as thoroughly opposed to the truth as it was in Jesus. The verse that I read, and that which I have specially before me, I feel I have some hesitation in speaking about, and can only look to the Lord to help me to say a little about it, for I remember that the last time a very beloved brother, who has now departed to be with Christ, spoke in this

room it was on this verse: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

It is a most important thing, the subject of light. I do not think we really know anything except as we get light from God. I refer for a moment to a passage which we had before us yesterday: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." What follows in Isaiah is—darkness was upon the people; but you get in a very despised place—not among the teachers of Israel, or the scribes, or great men, but in Galilee that the light sprang up. I cannot conceive a more important thing for our souls than to have light from God, and the Lord Jesus says, "*I* am the light of the world."

In chapter i. we have, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." What I understand by the life being light for men is, that everything was *livingly* expressed in Christ. "In him was life." I have no doubt it refers to Him coming down here as the light of men, though we have not yet had the statement in that chapter, that "the Word was made flesh." The life was the light of *men*, not of angels, but there was the great fact that *the life* was the light of men. The light of God was livingly

presented to men in Christ. To me that is an immense point. The light of God has come by means of life, and then it becomes to us the light of life, for this reason—that all the communications of God to us do not take the form of letter, but they become spirit and life by coming to us in Christ. It has been said, the words of God were realised in the life of a Man here upon earth. What God would make known to us was not now by letter, but in a living way in the Person of the Son. Hence it is Himself who is made known.

Let me say, Christ is the light of all scripture. I do not think I could too strongly press upon every one the great fact of having light. Christ Himself is light, and if our souls are not in touch with Christ we do not get light, and I do not think we know scripture either. Take Luke xxiv., when the Lord rose from the dead. In that chapter He greatly appeals to the scripture. He does not appeal at all to sense. When He rose from the dead, He was walking with the two disciples to Emmaus, and He does not say—It is Myself; do not you see who it is that is talking with you? That would have been the mere conviction of the senses, not a bit of light. They had the scriptures, and they ought to have known from the scriptures that Christ would rise from the dead. The Lord puts

forward the scriptures a great deal; but the point was, that *He Himself* was the light of all the scriptures: "He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things *concerning himself*." Himself was the light of all that was there; and if He opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, it was because *He* was the light of it all.

That leads me to another passage in 2 Corinthians iii., where the apostle contrasts the two ministries: the ministry of law, and the ministry of grace, that is, of the new covenant. In reality everything was veiled to Israel, they had not got light. It was not that they had not got the law and the testimony, but they had not light; they had the letter but not the spirit, and therefore the veil was upon their hearts; they had not got light. The apostle seeks to bring the Corinthians into the light of the Lord. In the end of that chapter there is rather a peculiar use of the word "Lord." It has often been noticed. We read, "The Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord, the Spirit." The way in which the word "Lord" is here used differs, I think, from its ordinary use in the New Testament. I

believe myself that it is equivalent to the word "Jehovah." For instance, "When it shall turn to the Lord" (ver. 16); that evidently refers to the heart of Israel turning to Jehovah. You may wonder why I bring that forward. I want to connect it with John viii., where it comes out that Jesus is Jehovah, the "I AM."

If you go on to 2 Corinthians iv. the apostle says, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." If a Jew had read the end of chapter iii. he would have said it is of Jehovah the writer speaks, but the apostle says in chapter iv. Christ Jesus is Lord. He is Jehovah and Lord of all. It is in that way you get the spirit of everything in scripture; He is the "I AM," the living breath all through the Old Testament; One who could say when here "I AM." I cannot explain it, but I see the blessedness of it. The Jews did not know that He was the "I AM," the One who spoke in the Old Testament. He had given that name to Israel, but they did not know its import. If they had known it they would have been able to say everything connected with Israel is living and abiding.

But it could not be known till the Lord Jesus Christ came. When He came, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men;" and in the end of this chapter He says, "I AM." Everything is living and subsisting in Christ. The

light of life shines upon everything in scripture for you, all comes out in Christ.

You must bear with my repetitions, but if I could impress you with the thought of light—Christ as light, and the light of life, I feel sure it would be a help to many. We should say one to another, “Come let us walk in the light of the Lord.” “In thy light we shall see light.” It is not by the study of scripture that we get this, but by having Christ as light. I would like to help, and to make it simple even to the youngest here. In this chapter the Jews ask Him, “Who art thou?” The answer is, “Even that I said unto you from the beginning.” The real meaning is, “I am really what I say.” Whatever the Lord *spoke*, He *was*. That is very easy to say; I would it were as easy to understand the full meaning of it! I trust I may help a little. I take a very simple illustration which I have often referred to, and I venture to use it again, one of the simplest and earliest statements of the Lord, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” If any one asked, What is it to be poor in spirit? If you look at the Lord Jesus you see it livingly expressed. He was what He said. Who was the One who down here never asserted Himself, who was always pleasing another? Who could say, “I do always those things that please him?” Always poor in spirit, He had but one

thought, that He might bring in the *light of God* to souls, and make known the Father! Who could say, "I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him that sent me." You see One who in everything—whatever He said, He Himself was *it*. It is a great thing to get the light of Christ.

Take another illustration, that of the tabernacle, for a moment. Israel had two testimonies: they had the law written with the finger of God, and the book of the law which Moses told Aaron to put into the ark; but they had also the tabernacle of testimony; the wonderful portraiture of heavenly things; they had not only directions as to certain things, and statutes, and ordinances, and the tables of the law written by God, but they had what (as far as it could) portrayed heavenly things that are to be displayed in the world to come. If they had really entered into the pattern and shadow of heavenly things, I do not doubt there was a wonderful testimony in the tabernacle to what is manifested in Christ. If they had gone into the tabernacle and said, "Every bit of this utters glory," what a light their soul would have entered into! This could not possibly be till Christ came.

It is the same with us. I do not see in scripture that the Lord unfolds the details of things so much, or else it would become to us a mere

text-book. I might refer to many things. Take for instance the subject of worship. The Spirit of God brings us in scripture to a point where He tells us we can enter into the holiest, but He does not tell us what worship is. The question is often asked, What is worship? You do not find it expounded in Hebrews as we have often heard. If I go to John iv. you get the living water, blessed affections springing up to the Father, but you do not get worship described because it is a living thing. You cannot describe the motions of life, the upspringing of love. Worship is a living thing; the response to the holy love of God. Suppose you get worship described, it would not help you to worship a bit, for it would be mere ritualism. Then again, suppose you had hymns written even by inspiration, it would not give you affection to Christ or make you a worshipper if you used them only in the letter. "A spiritual song" is the response of love to the blessed communications of divine love made known to the saints in Christ. Souls are brought into the sense of the love of God, and there is a living response produced in the heart by Christ, which the Spirit can help us to embody in a song. Christ taking His place in the midst—we realise what He is to us as coming to us from God, but we also realise what He is to God. If it is given to any one to

enter into this he may produce a spiritual song for the saints. The light of love shines in, and there is a response of love in the hearts of the saints to that.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The Son of God who was preached among you by us was not yea and nay, but in him was the yea." All the divine verity was in Him. Perhaps you say—Are not the scriptures true? Yes, they are indeed; but God has secured the divine verity of everything *in His Son*. He is the Yea and Amen of all that is in scripture. I trust no one will misunderstand me. It is not that I do not want you to have profound regard for the scriptures, but I want you to get the light of Christ. I may not be able to put it out well, but I am sure that what we want is Christ as the light of God by the Spirit.

If you look again at the end of 2 Corinthians iii., where we have "the Lord," I am sure you will see that the "I AM" of John viii., Jehovah, is the Spirit of scripture. When Christ shines on the house of Israel, they will respond to the word "Let us walk in the light of the Lord," and He who is "I AM" is the light of everything in scripture to ourselves.

Well, dear friends, it is for each of us to say, How far am I in the light of Christ? How far is Christ light to me? The scriptures speak of

Christ, but Christ Himself is the light. That is the great thing.

I go fully with a remark that was made yesterday as to the names of God in the Old Testament. He was pleased to take certain names as "Almighty" and "Jehovah," with regard to His people, and in carrying out His ways upon earth; but *He Himself* was not revealed. You could not have the revelation of God Himself till you have the name of Father and the Son and the Spirit, and that could not be till the Son was here. The moment the Son was here you can get God fully revealed: Father, Son and Holy Ghost; we have *Himself*. That leads me to another thing, The answer in us to the revelation of God is the knowledge of God. If we knew God better, things would become very simple to us. I can quite understand the apostle in Ephesians i. praying that we might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the *knowledge of God* and that we might know the hope of *His* calling and the riches of the glory of *His* inheritance in the saints. If I know God I would know a little better His calling and His inheritance; and do not you think each of us would be a little truer to the calling if we knew God better? Do you think we would be affected by the influences we were speaking of yesterday—affected, as we know we

are, by the course and current of this world if we had the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of our heart being enlightened to know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints? The glory of Christ which is yet going to break upon this scene—is that which would occupy us. It would be the great thing before our souls. We would be true to the calling of God and seek to answer to it. I feel so much that we are not in the truth of the calling. How little our souls leave *the things* here!

I have often thought—and I got the thought from another—that if three angels were to come to our door in this day we should not know how to entertain them; we should not very well know how to entertain a heavenly visitor. We can entertain people who belong to this present scene and know how to make them comfortable, but I doubt very much if any of us could entertain a heavenly visitor as Abraham did. I do not think we are enough out of the course of things here in our ways and manners; we do not know God enough. Abraham had a perception of who they were, and knew how to entertain them in the most beautiful way; and yet it was in the dignified way of a saint who walked worthy of his calling. And we, with more light,

if we only knew what the dignity of saintship is how much more Christ would have His place in our hearts! He would be light in our hearts and in our houses. He would be light in everything for us.

I close with commending the subject of light to you. The Lord says in this chapter: "If ye believe not that *I am* he;" and again, "Ye shall know that I am he." These words "I am he" had an immense significance. I do not say they exactly mean "Jehovah" there, but the use of the words "I am he" expressed what was in Himself. If our souls only get the sense of the glory of the person of Christ, the only One who could possibly reveal God, and make Him known, and if that One were light to our souls, we should not have so many difficulties. The Lord grant that it may be so for His namesake!

T. H. R.



THE WORD OF GOD.

(1 PET. I. 23-25.)

I WANTED to say a little in regard to "the word of God." It is important to understand the idea which is intended to be conveyed by it. Reference was made to the way in which, in Luke xxiv., the Lord spoke to the two disciples. No doubt in that chapter the Lord, in a sense, took the place of the Spirit in expounding the scriptures to His disciples. We must enter a little into the position they occupied, and indeed into that of all the Old Testament saints. What they had up to then, "the law and the testimony," was everything to them, but in Luke xxiv. the point is, that while everything previously spoken was confirmed in Christ, it was He Himself who then spoke to them. He was the "Yea and Amen" of all. And He was going to the Father to send to them the promise of the Father. Not merely was it that everything that God had purposed had its confirmation in Christ, but the power of all was to be down here in the Spirit. That is the spirit in which He blessed them, and "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." He went up to heaven to send on them the promise

of the Father, and we have now, in contrast to what saints in previous times had, Christ, and every thought of God, everything spoken in anticipation, now established in Christ; the reality has come in, and, at the same time, the power of it down here in the Spirit. In every way you will find a correspondence in the Spirit to whatever has come out in Christ. The Spirit is spoken of as the Spirit of Christ, but also as the Spirit of God and even the Spirit of the Father. Everything is now witnessed and maintained here in the Holy Ghost. Christ went back to the Father that He might send from the Father the promise of the Spirit. That is what we get in Luke xxiv. I call attention to the contrast between what had been, what men rightly held to, and what marks this moment: Christ gone to the Father, every thought of God having its establishment and confirmation in Him, and He having sent down from the Father the promise of the Father, the Spirit.

To make things clear, I would notice a distinction between "the truth" and "the word of God." God's word is truth. Scripture says, "Thy word is truth." But there is, I think, a distinction between "the truth" and "the word of God." Scripture appears to make the distinction. "The truth" is the revelation of

God. On the other hand, speaking in a general way, "the word of God" gives the idea of the revelation of God's thought and mind in regard to men. It may indeed go wider than man; but in general it is the expression of His mind in regard of man; and His word is ever truth characteristically. But at the same time there is "*the truth*," and that is a great thing to hold by. Christ is "*the truth*," and the Spirit is "the truth." These are statements made in scripture, and entirely incontrovertible. It is remarkable that while the word of God is the expression of His thought and purpose with regard to man which comes out in a sovereign way, yet the revelation of God has come out in relation to man's state and necessities. If you go through scripture I think you will find such to be the case.

The name "Almighty" came out in connection with the weakness of Abraham. God had made far-reaching promises to Abraham in connection with himself and his seed, and yet Abraham was under the common liability of death. All these promises depended, as far as Abraham was concerned, on resurrection, and it is in that connection that God made Himself known as the Almighty God who quickens the dead. You have only to read Romans iv. to see that "he believed in God who quickeneth the dead and

calleth the things that are not as though they were." That was in connection with the fact that Abraham was under the power of death.

The same principle is true in regard of Israel. In taking up Israel, God knew that He was taking up a people after the flesh, who, though they might be impressed by God's dealings for the moment, would be entirely incapable of remaining in faithfulness to God. Everything precious entrusted to them they would certainly lose. That is met by the revelation of the name of Jehovah, which indicates the eternal faithfulness of God to His own engagements. That comes out in contrast to the weakness of the people who were sure to surrender all that God had given to them. The people soon forgot the promises, these lost power with them, they had the law, but the living promises of God were lost sight of; but after all God had revealed His name as Jehovah, and that secured the eventual blessing of the people, and their getting the promises in the sovereignty of God's mercy. You get that brought out in Romans xi. In chapter iv. you get the Almighty, in chapter xi. Jehovah. Both names come out in connection with the weakness of man.

If I go further and speak of the name of Father under which God has now revealed Himself, what has been the occasion of that? Why,

the sending of the Son to be the Saviour of the world. "God is love," and "we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." We have the revelation of the love of God; but the immediate occasion of that revelation is the condition of man as down here under liabilities in regard of God of which he cannot free himself. The case could only be met by God coming out in self-sacrificing love. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." The condition of man becomes the occasion of God coming out in the full revelation of Himself in the Son. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In all that, as far as I understand it, you have the truth—Christ is the truth—and nothing comes up fully to the idea of the truth except the revelation of God. And I think you must distinguish between the revelation of God and the word of God, that is, the expression of His mind toward man, and yet

the one depends on the other ; the word of God takes its character from the revelation of God. You cannot understand the one apart from the other, though one may distinguish between them. All His thought and purpose in regard of man takes its character from the revelation of Himself. That is the point I want to make plain. Everything hangs together. His mind as to man hangs upon the revelation of Himself, on what He is, and the necessity of man has brought this to light. The more you look at it the more you see that the word of God wholly depends upon the revelation of God, but the revelation of God is the truth. It is a point of moment. Christ is the truth, and the Spirit is the truth. You could not say the Father is the truth, because He is not the expression. Christ is the truth as being the expression of God, and the Spirit subjectively in believers is the truth, perfectly answering to the revelation.

I come now to the word of God, and I look upon it as being the expression of God's mind and purpose in regard of man, and Christ is that. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and at the same time Christ is the Word, the expression of God's mind in regard to man.

I venture to put it in this way: I should lay it down as a principle, that whatever

has been expressed in Christ *as man* is God's mind for man. I ask you to judge this. It is clear enough to my mind, and I would like to make it clear to all. I am not now speaking of revelation. Of course, everything which has been expressed in Christ as man takes its character from that which Christ is. Nothing could be expressed in Christ which was contrary or unsuitable to Himself. Everything expressed in Him must take its character from that which He is.

I refer to three points: the first is righteousness—it was the first thing that it was necessary for God to establish; the next is sonship; the third is eternal life. I take up these three things as having been expressed in Christ, and I want to shew you that they are the mind of God in regard of man down here. These thoughts come out in the Old Testament. They are not new. We shall see this if we go back to Abraham for a moment. What came out in him was righteousness; promises were given him, but the great point in regard to him was righteousness by faith. Abraham was accounted righteous. He stood in the account of God in righteous relation to Himself. You get the great principle of righteousness established. He is the father thus of all that believe.

In Israel we get another expression of the

mind of God. God's word to Pharaoh was, "Israel is my son, my firstborn." "Let my son go, that he may serve me." You get here the idea of sonship, I admit, in regard of the nation; but anyway there is the idea of sonship and service. Sonship implies that there should be a point where the love of God could rest, so that He might be served. God could not be served where His love could not rest. The great idea was a point where love could rest. If divine love could not rest in you and me and we be conscious of it, we could not serve God. It is an impossibility that He could be served otherwise. You are familiar with the passage in Zephaniah: "He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing"—and that here upon earth.

Why are we so defective in ability for the service of God? I think it is because we have so little apprehension of sonship and divine love resting there. We have so little apprehension of the calling.

I pass on to the third point—eternal life. It is curious that the thought of eternal life comes out in David. Righteousness in Abraham, sonship in Israel, and David is the first to speak of eternal life. He speaks of it in Psalm xxi. and again in Psalm cxxxiii., which is "a song of degrees of David." "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." These

things were all in anticipation, for the reality could not come out then either in regard to Abraham, or Israel after the flesh, or David. David never came into eternal life down here, but it is evident that these things were the mind and thought of God in regard of man.

Now all has come out. The Son of God has come forth. He says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart." The Son of God takes a path. The moment He takes a path as Man He is necessarily the righteous One. He was the righteous Jehovah, the righteous God, but the moment He becomes man, He takes a path He never did before. God prescribes a path; man takes a path, and Christ becomes man and He takes a path to fulfil all righteousness. He undertakes the responsibilities under which man lay that we might stand in relation to Him as the Sun of righteousness—like the moon to the earth or the earth to the sun. That is the relation in which we stand to Christ. Sonship is evident and everything takes its character from what Christ is Himself. He is Son. And eternal life has been manifested in Him. In Christ down here upon earth there was an energy of life which rendered impotent the power of death and the forces of evil, and that is what eternal life means in its principle.

Every thought of God in regard to man has its full and perfect expression in Christ. He is the truth, the revelation of God, but He is also the Word, that is, the expression of God's mind in regard to man, and the one hangs upon the other. There could be no thought in regard of man except what depended upon the truth, what is consistent with it and taking its character from it. When we come into the apprehension of God's mind we find that we are in the full and blessed light of the revelation of God. All our blessing—every element of it, brings us into the full light of the love of God. He has brought us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We walk in the light as God is in the light. God has shone out and our blessing is in the presence of the glory of God.

We have righteousness, we have sonship, and God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

One word more. We have come into the full light of God's thought in regard of man, and Israel too will come into it. Even the nations will participate in righteousness and in a certain way in eternal life.

I hold it to be an incontrovertible principle that what has been set forth in Christ as man is God's mind for man. It is a great thing to get hold of a principle that can be carried through.

We have now been brought into the light of God's word and it is Christ, and we have the answer to Christ in us. Christ was bent upon gathering those to whom He could impart His Spirit. From the outset you see this. He gives living water springing up in the recipient to eternal life—that is in divine, quickening power in affection, so to fill us that the believer rises up to the full light of Christ, and in getting into the full light of Christ we come into the full light of God's mind with regard to man. It is not God's thought about any particular people, but about man; every man may have it, but through grace we have been brought into it and we get it made efficient in us by the Spirit. We come into righteousness efficiently by the Spirit of God. I quite admit a man is justified by faith, but we come into righteous relation to God and to Christ by the Spirit. The Spirit is the seal of righteousness. The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. You may apprehend that God can justify the ungodly, but I do not think you can come efficiently into righteousness but by the Spirit. The Spirit is life, too, in regard of righteousness.

I need hardly say it is in the same way we come practically into sonship. The Spirit so makes us acquainted with the love of God in Christ that we come into the sense of it. The

love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. The Spirit in us cries Abba, Father.

And so, as regards eternal life. It is a question of proximity to Christ. If you get close to Christ you come into eternal life. "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." It seems a simple question of being brought by the Spirit into proximity to the Son. We get under the influence of that which marks the Son. "He is the true God and eternal life." Thus Christ is the word of God, the perfect expression of His mind in regard of man. All is in connection with the light of which we have heard this morning. The immediate occasion of the revelation of God has been the weakness of man through sin. If that be the case, do not you think that man might trust God? It is not my strength or my suitableness which has brought out the revelation of God, but my helpless condition--and God in Christ has taken occasion to make known His thoughts in regard to man. His communications are livingly expressed to us in the Son of His love. It is not in terms but in a Person. Righteousness, sonship, and eternal life we apprehend in a Person, and not only so, but that Person is represented in us by the Spirit. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

I had a good deal of diffidence in attempting to speak at this time, but I feel it is important to make clear what the word of God is in its moral sense, and how it is substantiated in the people of God by the Spirit of God.

F. E. R.



READING.

THE PRESENCE AND OPERATIONS OF THE SPIRIT.

(JOHN XIV. 1-27.)

E. C. I should like to know a little more about what you said in connection with the Spirit as truth, and His operation in the Christian—such as we get in John xiv. in connection with His presence.

W. W. What was that? will you repeat the suggestion?

E. C. Some further light as to the presence of the Spirit and the manner of His operation in the Christian and in the church starting from that expression, "The Spirit is the truth." Some further development as to the way it is to be understood.

D. L. H. Did I understand correctly this morning that the thought of the Spirit of truth is the revelation of God manward, and the word of God the other way—man to God?

F. E. R. Nothing short of the revelation of

God comes up to the idea of *the truth*. There is "*the truth*" and "truth," but nothing short of the revelation of God could be designated as *the truth*. When Christ is spoken of as the truth and the Spirit as the truth, both are connected with the revelation of God. I think you get light on it in 1 John ii. 20, 21: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." The truth seems bound up with the revelation of God.

F. H. B. Would it not embrace the idea of our relationship with the Father and the Son?

F. E. R. I doubt it. It says, the Spirit is *the truth*.

F. H. B. But I thought that Christ in glory is the expression of the mind of God as to man?

F. E. R. Yes; but He is also the truth.

QUES. Where is it said, "The Spirit is the truth"?

F. E. R. In 1 John v. It is a proposition which is reciprocal. The Spirit is the truth, and the truth is the Spirit. Christ has come as the revelation of God, and the Spirit bears witness. He bears witness to the truth, but He is Himself the truth.

F. H. B. The Spirit is to witness of Christ in glory.

F. E. R. Yes; He bears witness, but He is also the truth.

F. C. Is that because He expresses what is revealed of God?

F. E. R. Yes.

E. C. Is that in Himself or in the Christian?

F. E. R. He dwells in the Christian to affect him by all that has come to light in Christ. No one can enter into the knowledge of God save by the Spirit. Christ is "the truth" objectively. The Spirit is "the truth" subjectively, that is, in the believer. The first work of the Spirit in the believer is to establish the revelation of God in him. He brings home to us the way in which that revelation has come out.

QUES. Is it done by ministry?

F. E. R. No; by divine power. No ministry can effectually lead you into the knowledge of God. You can only know God by the Spirit. The Spirit establishes the revelation of God in our hearts, so that they may be governed by what God is. I could not tell you how, but divine love is made effectual in us by divine power.

QUES. Then what is the good of ministry?

F. E. R. It brings the mind of God under the attention of saints, but it does not by itself effect any result in us. It is a mistake to suppose that it effects anything in itself.

QUES. What does?

F. E. R. Ministry tends to bring about exercise, and it is by the exercise the Spirit works to bring something about in us.

G. G. Is the exercise produced by the Spirit ?

F. E. R. Yes ; there is no result wrought in anybody until there is exercise ; ministry may occasion exercise, but the Spirit must make it effective.

A. S. L. You say the Spirit is the truth in the believer ?

F. E. R. Yes. Every believer in having the Spirit has the truth in himself, only he may not be prepared for it. The babe has the truth in its entirety in having the Spirit, but it may be that he has but little of it wrought in him. There growth comes in.

A. H. You have said somewhere that it took God to reveal God, and it takes God to make God known in us.

F. E. R. It takes God to make us know God, but the truth in its entirety is in the Christian because the Spirit is there, all else is growth in it. Most people are content to have the truth in the Spirit, and are not anxious about its being wrought in themselves. It is the difference in a sense between Romans and Ephesians and Colossians. In Romans v. and viii. we have everything in the Spirit. In Ephesians and Colossians the language is changed. It is "you

hath he quickened." In Romans there is nothing about quickening as in the present or putting on the new man, but there is in Ephesians and Colossians.

D. L. H. Ministry is for the perfecting of the saints?

F. E. R. Yes ; but as a question of intelligence. Gift keeps God's mind under the attention of the saints ; but having the Spirit you are independent of man. You have everything in the Spirit. "Ye need not that any man should teach you." The Spirit is the truth in the saints.

QUES. "Thy word is truth?"

F. E. R. That is characteristic. There is a shade of difference between truth and *the* truth.

QUES. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest." What is that? Is it confined to the beginning?

F. E. R. No ; any one practising truth cometh to the light that his deeds might be made manifest. Christ was in that way the test. The truth came as light, and brought out where every one was, and the one who did truth came to the light. When a man is acting with regard to God he is doing truth. Old Testament saints who acted in reference to God as far as He was known, were doing truth.

QUES. "The same anointing teacheth you all

things and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Was not this always true?

F. E. R. You could not say that the truth was here until Christ came. Truth came by Christ. He is the truth. But the truth having come, it has to be maintained, and the maintenance of the truth now is by the Spirit. The revelation has come, and the power that maintains the revelation is the Spirit of God. The maintenance of the revelation is entirely dependent on the Spirit, and nothing can sweep it away. Christianity is maintained by divine power; there is no cause for any fear as to it. No power could get rid of the Spirit, even if the scriptures could be got rid of.

F. H. B. The Spirit is here, and maintains the truth in spite of all opposition.

W. B. How is the church the pillar and ground of the truth?

F. E. R. The Spirit maintains the truth in the church in a public way. What was revealed in Christ is maintained by the Spirit. Everything in the way of public expression or witness depends on the church.

H. H. You said we had the truth objectively in Christ and subjectively in the Spirit. How?

F. E. R. It is in this that the difference between the gospels and the epistles consists.

What was presented in Christ is realised by the Spirit in the saints.

H. D'A. C. Spirit of truth ?

F. E. R. It is the spirit of truth in contrast to the letter.

QUES. What is "the truth as it is in Jesus" ?

F. E. R. That is what is characteristic in Jesus. *The truth* is the revelation of the Father and the Son. In John xiv. the Spirit is looked at as the Comforter, the Paraclete. Further on the Lord says of the Spirit, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

T. H. R. All this is to enable the saints to take the place of Christ down here morally, when He is absent. Christ was the truth here, and now the Spirit is the truth.

F. E. R. The revelation of God is what is to characterise Christians morally. Christians are the fruit of the light, and are to display God. "That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

QUES. Would it be right to say that the Old Testament saints had truth, but when Christ came there was *the* truth ?

F. E. R. There were true things, but that does not rise to the idea of *the truth*. You must, I think, distinguish between truth and *the* truth; the latter is the revelation of the Father and the Son.

F. H. B. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ ?

F. E. R. That is more characteristic, it is in contrast to law. That would mean Christianity. Verse 17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." You get two nouns, but the verb is in the singular.

H. H. How does the Spirit effectuate the truth in us ?

F. E. R. I think the work of the Spirit is to quicken the saints in spiritual affections, to bring them into the full light of Christ, which is God revealed, but I could not tell you the mode of His working. We have all to come under divine teaching, and we are brought into the house of God to that end.

W. W. What does "Comforter" mean in John xiv. ? Is it the same as in the epistle—the advocate who undertakes the cause of another ?

F. E. R. Mr. Darby used the word solicitor or patron.

F. H. B. John speaks of "the truth abiding in us." I suppose that is by the Spirit abiding in us ?

F. E. R. Yes. It is not enough to take account of the fact that the Spirit is in you, but what does He abide in you for ? The first object is that the revelation of God may become effectual in us, so that we may come under the

influence of the light that has been brought to us in Christ.

QUES. Is it to form us by it ?

F. E. R. Yes ; the only formative principle is the knowledge of God. We are defective because we have come so little under the practical effect of the knowledge of God. Nothing else is effective.

T. H. R. Nothing else would be real in us apart from the Spirit.

F. E. R. Nothing affects a man really save the light of God.

QUES. You spoke of quickening in Ephesians and Colossians in contrast to Romans ?

F. E. R. We do not get quickening in a present sense in Romans. It is true you have everything in having the Spirit, but then you have to be formed in all. There is the difference between *having* the things and being *formed* in them. Take a newly born babe, what has it got ?

G. G. Life ?

F. E. R. I should say not in an intelligent moral sense.

QUES. What then ?

F. E. R. The thing it has is sensibilities.

W. H. Then it has life ?

F. E. R. If you speak of life merely physically, so has an animal, but I am speaking

morally ; what comes to pass with a babe is, that it finds itself in connection with relationships and affections, and by these its moral sense is formed. It finds itself the object of care and affection, and these produce affections in it ; that is, life comes in in a moral sense through its surroundings. So, by the knowledge of God we are formed spiritually, and in Ephesians and Colossians the apostle can say " Hath quickened us together with Christ."

T. H. R. That brings us to the assembly. Where quickening and affections are brought in, they are assembly epistles.

QUES. Why ?

T. H. R. Because that is where divine affections flow.

QUES. Is that why you say we are brought into the house of God to be under divine teaching ?

F. E. R. Yes, and that is effected by making us acquainted with divine affections and care.

W. A. W. Being " born of God " is—I have been affected by the revelation of God.

F. E. R. Yes ; you have been morally affected by it. You know God and love God.

QUES. In what way would you say that a babe has sensibilities ?

F. E. R. A cry is an expression of sensibility. What I meant was in connection with *new birth*.

But the "babe" in Christianity has more than sensibilities. It has been affected by the revelation of God, and can thus be said to be "born of God." That corresponds to 1 Peter i. 23.

G. G. Are the sensibilities produced by the Spirit?

F. E. R. Yes. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," thus the sensibilities are spiritual sensibilities. Life in a moral sense results from being brought into circumstances which act upon one. J. N. D. defined life as "The ability to enjoy the position in which God has set you." That is life in a moral sense. How is one to enjoy the position in which we are set as sons? It can only be as having been divinely taught—instructed in divine love. You may tell a person he is a son, but you cannot make him enjoy it. It is impossible for him to enjoy it unless he is acquainted with the disposition of God towards him, and nothing but the Spirit of God can teach you God's disposition towards you. No amount of ministry can do so. The new covenant is really divine teaching.

W. H. "The Lord give thee understanding in all things." Is that by the Spirit?

F. E. R. Yes.

A. S. L. What is the operation of the Spirit in connection with John vii.? Is chapter iv. the fountain, and chapter vii. the flowing out of

the living water. Is it the activities of the Spirit?

F. E. R. In John iv. the gift is connected with the Son of God. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." In John vii. the Spirit is given in connection with Jesus glorified. In the former the Son of God had come down to make known divine love, and the Spirit was to be given to make it effective. He takes possession of the affections of the Christian so that they spring up to eternal life.

QUES. Do you connect that with worship? would the effect of the springing up to eternal life be worship? Is it realised in worship when in assembly?

F. E. R. I think so. You do not really get worship till you reach eternal life.

QUES. What is the difference between eternal life here and in John vi.?

F. E. R. In John vi. all is seen on the experimental side. In John iv. it is on the other side—the giving of God and its character. Romans v. is the Spirit's work on the divine side, He makes God's love effectually known to us. In chapter viii. He acts on our side. One is going up, and the other coming down.

QUES: And in John vii. what is it there?

F. E. R. The Spirit is connected with Jesus glorified and He brings in the new Head. It is the sense of Jesus the glorified Man there as Head.

T. H. R. It is what characterises the New Jerusalem there. You get rivers flowing out. The river flows from the New Jerusalem. In John vii. it is blessing coming from heaven, in contrast to the Jew's feast of tabernacles, which was blessing on earth. We know Christ in heaven, and as having the Spirit we are to be contributors to this scene, we do not want anything from it. The New Jerusalem does not receive anything from the earth but contributes to it. That is the idea of it. So we anticipate the heavenly city. Living waters flow through the belly. It is all real—they come out through the affections. You are so in the sense of Jesus glorified that you are a source of healthful life—inspiring influence to all around. You get the idea of a river all through scripture. Rivers flowed out of the garden of Eden. Here it is flowing out from the affections of the believer. Mr. Stoney used to say that we are contributors to this scene.

QUES. To whom do they flow in John vii.?

T. H. R. It is the love of God flowing out to this scene.

QUES. What would be the difference between the springing up of the water, and the flowing out? Would the latter be ministry?

F. E. R. No. I do not think so. It is what was to characterise every saint, the soul being in such a sense of what has come out in the love of God that all that comes from a man is characterised by it, and has a healthful influence on others. Out of his belly flow rivers of living water. You cannot give out the good if you are not in the sense of it yourself. Everything about Christ and all that came from Him had a holy life-giving influence, all came from another world, not one bit from this world.

QUES. Should it be confined to the christian circle or everywhere?

T. H. R. Everywhere, as it will be in the heavenly Jerusalem.

W. B. That makes one ashamed of oneself.

F. E. R. Yes; but what would the world be without Christians? If christian influence were taken away what kind of a place would the world be, and what *will* it be? All that is true in the believer indicates what Christ will be by-and-by with regard to all on earth. One great thing is, that as Christ is the Head of every man, all then will come under His healthful influence as Head. He is the source of every healthgiving influence that every one might

come under it. Christ is the Head of every man, and all distinctions of men are lost sight of in view of that.

QUES. Would you say that Romans viii. is individual?

F. E. R. Romans is taken up with the individual path of the Christian down here, it leads him in the path of righteousness. If I want to understand my individual path for the will of God I go to Romans. We never get to a moment where we can do without the truth in Romans. It is of the last importance to us. The truth in it does not go on to the assembly, though it may be preparatory for it. If you are in the truth of the assembly, you will carry out the instructions of Romans in your own path.

QUES. Would you say the commandments of the Lord in John xiv. go beyond Romans?

F. E. R. I do not know. I think in John xiv. the Lord is speaking more to His disciples collectively. Verse 23 is individual.

QUES. Why does it pass from the collective to the individual in this verse 21: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

F. E. R. Verse 21 is a test. All tests are

presented individually. If you want to know whether you love Christ, the question is, Have you His commandments and do you keep them? John's epistle abounds in tests of that kind.

QUES. There is individual communion there. "We will make our abode"?

F. E. R. Yes, evidently so. So in the promise to the individual in Laodicea: "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"; but what is true to the individual can hardly come up to what you have in the assembly.

W. A. W. I suppose we are shut up to the Spirit in these three chapters—xiv., xv., xvi.?

F. E. R. Yes. What can there be in this world where Christ is rejected save what is of the Spirit of God? How could anything be maintained here for God except in the Spirit of God? The chapters are in connection with the witnessing for Christ. Chapter xiv. is preparatory; chapter xv., fruit-bearing; and in chapter xvi. we have the witness, and then the position of the disciples is more definitely brought out in regard to things. "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

W. G. B. Do you distinguish between the Spirit dwelling in the believer and in the assembly?

F. E. R. He dwells in the assembly as being in believers. The Spirit never came upon

one single individual. The Spirit came on the 120 on the day of Pentecost. The body was the vessel of the Spirit. Christ prepared the vessel, the Spirit came and takes possession of it, and by the fact of the baptism of the Holy Ghost believers were all formed into one body. We are builded together for an habitation of God by the Spirit. New birth does not in itself demand the presence of the Spirit. New birth was there before the Spirit came and will be after the church is gone, when the Spirit will consequently be no longer here. *Now* every one who partakes of the Spirit is brought into the dwelling-place of God by the Spirit. Christ prepared the material for God's house, and on the day of Pentecost the Spirit came to take up His abode, and He has been here from that day to this. By the fact of having part in the Spirit individually we are brought into the place where the Spirit is. The Spirit is in each individual, but He is not in you independently of the rest.

T. H. R. In speaking of the indwelling Spirit you have to take care that you do not separate yourself from the company upon whom the baptism of the Spirit came.

F. E. R. That is very important.

T. H. R. Each believer has the Spirit, but do not put it apart from that which is collective.

It is an immense truth that Christ's presence here on earth was succeeded by a company which Christ formed, and the Spirit came to it, and we partake in that Spirit, and we have to take care that we do not sever ourselves from that which the baptism of the Spirit formed—the house of God.

QUES. “Filled the house and sat on each.” What do you make of that?

F. E. R. The *sound* filled the house, and each one partook of the Spirit. That is, the influence went further than the persons. “Dwelling” is in contrast with Christ, who was departing. In John xiv. the Spirit was to abide—which Christ did not. Every one of God's household partakes of the Spirit, and the Spirit undertakes to support and conduct you in your individual path here. The Spirit is connected with the individual in Romans viii.; so in 1 Cor. vi.—I must take care what I do with my body, because my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

QUES. Partakers of the Holy Ghost—what is that?

F. E. R. That means “companions.” People may come into the sphere of the Holy Ghost's presence and operations who have not received the Spirit.

QUES. Is it the sphere of which Peter speaks

when he says, "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"?

F. E. R. That raises the question whether you are really a Christian or not. If you are, you taste the Lord is gracious, and then you go further. Everything for God here must be in the Spirit, and if we realise that we shall refuse everything of ourselves and of the mind of the flesh and all fleshly interests. If not we are content with the mustard-tree or the great house and the three measures of meal, but in the eye of God that is confusion.

QUES. "Drink into one Spirit," what is that?

F. E. R. "One Spirit" there is not exactly the Holy Ghost. It indicates the end of Jew and Gentile in unity.

REMARKED. There was nothing here for God when Christ was here save Christ.

F. E. R. We want certain sentiments that are in the Spirit, such as patriotism and loyalty.

QUES. What sort of patriotism?

F. E. R. The love of *your* country. I do not mean of England; and we want loyalty, but in the right quarter—loyalty to Christ. Loyalty is a great thing, but we first want the idea of God's king, and you cannot get that down here. I want to love my country, but I should not like to be a patriot in regard of so small a country as

England; and I should be loyal, but with the right idea of a king, and for that I must have the Lamb and the Lion. In Revelation v. there are the two, and until I see the two in the King, no king will exercise much influence over me. In the Lamb you get the meekest Man upon earth, and in the Lion one strong against all evil.

QUES. But if you saw a king with fine moral qualities you would think more of him than of one who had not ?

F. E. R. It is all of that man who is gone for God. Now that I have got the true idea of the King I am not going to be carried away by what man admires.

E. C. Psalm xlv. is what should characterise the true King, "And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness."

F. E. R. Yes. There you get the Lion and the Lamb. Meekness now in connection with a king would not be admired. I do not think God's king will be condescending.



“THE DEATH OF CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF A NEW CON- DITION FOR MAN.”

(JOHN XII. 23-33.)

It has been remarked, beloved friends, that the condition in which we were has become the occasion for God to reveal Himself, and I think in connection with that remark two other thoughts suggest themselves, namely, that at the time of His revealing Himself, God removed from under His eye the condition in which man was, and also in that revelation laid the foundation for a new condition for man in Christ. In the death of Christ God has been revealed, man's condition ended, and the foundation laid for an entirely new condition for man in the revelation of Himself in love.

I dare say many here will have noticed that in the gospel of John the Lord very frequently alludes to His death, more frequently, I think, than in any of the other gospels, and that, generally speaking, a twofold thought underlies His statements in this gospel when He is thus

looking forward to His death. I have only to call attention to two or three passages to shew you what I mean. Turn first to chapter iii. 14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," &c. Our condition necessitated that the Son of man should be lifted up if that condition was to be removed; but in His having been lifted up that condition has been for ever ended for the eye of God, and also for the apprehension of our faith. The man to whom the condition attached has come to his moral ending in the death of the Son of man.

In connection with this truth, the Lord in verse 16 brings in the other thought to which I refer, in the statement "For God so loved the world," &c. The two verses bring before us the twofold import of the death of Christ as generally presented in this gospel: on the one hand, the Son of man has been lifted up to the end that the man that had sinned might be removed from under the eye of God; and on the other hand, the love of God has been therein revealed, a love which becomes the foundation for a new condition for man in Christ Jesus. The old condition of man that had become the occasion for God to reveal Himself has been ended for God in the removal of the man in the death of Christ, and the love of God has become the source and

spring of a new condition for man according to the good pleasure of God.

Now if we go on to chapter vi. 53 we shall see that the Lord is again alluding to His death in the words, "Except ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and shall have drunk his blood, ye have no life in you"; and again, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life."

It is impossible for man after the flesh to eat the "living bread" come down from heaven; we must begin with His death, we must first eat His flesh and drink His blood. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood involves His death, for His precious blood is viewed as having been shed.

Here again I think we have in principle the same twofold thought, that we have been considering, set forth in the flesh and blood of the Son of man. In His flesh given in death the end of man after the flesh is seen, and in His shed blood is seen the fullest expression of the great love of God, not here presented objectively for faith, as in chapter iii., but presented for the appropriation of our souls. In eating we appropriate to ourselves in the fullest possible way what we eat. In eating His flesh we appropriate to ourselves in the fullest way the death of Christ, and we therein acknowledge the solemn

fact that we as men in the flesh have been morally ended in His death; we accept the closing up of our old history and condition, and in drinking His blood we receive in our inmost souls the great love of God of which the death of Christ is the proof and witness, and in the enjoyment of that love we live to God in a new condition of life; we have eternal life.

Apart from this double action on the part of man—the appropriation of the death of Christ as having ended himself as in the flesh, and the apprehension and appropriation of the love of God that was also evidenced in that death, he has no life in him. On the other hand, he that eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life.

I would also remark that in verse 54 a continuous action of the soul is supposed, “He that eateth and drinketh.” This is not an act done once for all, neither is it the partaking of the Lord’s Supper, which latter is necessarily occasional, but a *continuous* appropriation of this twofold import of the death of Christ—that death in which man that was under judgment has been ended, and in which the love of God has been fully expressed.

I go on now to chapter x. where the “one flock”—the collective company, comes into view, which is in principle the “one body.” In this

chapter the Lord speaks of Himself as the good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep and the bringing of Jew and Gentile sheep together into one flock. This was afterwards spoken of by the Apostle Paul as "the mystery," but it is important to see that the elements of the mystery as of all truth, were introduced by the Lord and begun to be unfolded by Him.

In this chapter the death of Christ is considered in relation to the whole company of the saints—the one flock, while in chapters iii. and vi. the individual is more in view. "*He that eateth,*" &c. We all begin with what is individual, but we should go on to what is collective—to the thought of the assembly. Such distinctions as Jew and Gentile necessarily end in death, and His sheep become one flock—a new company under one Shepherd.

Turn now to verse 17, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." The reason the Lord gives here for laying down His life is that He might take it again—that He might take it in an entirely new condition beyond death and all that sin had brought in—that He might take it in a new sphere so that He might have His sheep with Him. The blessed Son of the Father laid down His life that He might take it again in a new condition, on the ever firm platform of

resurrection beyond death, so that the purposes of the Father as to His sheep might be fulfilled, and that He might have them in association with Himself in that condition of life in which He lives unto God. He ended our old condition in His death—that condition which had become the occasion for God to reveal Himself in Him, and He gives us to enter with Himself into the blessedness and joy of the Father’s love, which, I need not say, is for us an entirely new condition of life.

Now I go on to chapter xii. 24. The “corn of wheat,” the Lord Jesus Christ, was in the world, but He must die if fruit as found in Him be reproduced in us. If those moral traits so manifest in Him are to be continued in the saints, He must die. And in connection with this announcement He says, “He that loveth his life shall lose it ; but he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” It comes to this—if we are loving life in this world ; if we are living in those things in which men live here on earth, we shall know nothing of the blessedness of being of this heavenly corn of wheat, we shall be strangers to those graces and moral qualities which have their source and spring in Him. He who lives in that which goes to make up life in this world—that in which man’s will works and in which he seeks

his pleasure here, shall lose his true life ; but he who in the acceptance of death with Christ shall turn his back upon those things in which men live, shall keep his life unto life eternal ; he will live to God in that new condition of which we have been speaking.

But this necessitates that we follow Him. Are we prepared for this, beloved brethren ? I have thought lately that to be a disciple of the Lord involves a very great deal. If we follow Him, we must follow Him out of this world in spirit, for He has actually gone out by the way of death.

Again I ask, are we prepared for this step ? Are we prepared, in the spirit of our minds, to follow Him out of things here ? If we would follow Him we must be in the acceptance of death with Him, we must eat His flesh, we must follow Him in the path that He has trodden. But, thank God, that pathway did not end in death ; He has been shewn the path of life in another world, on the other side of death ; He has taken life again in that world of blessedness where He lives with the Father, and it is our privilege to follow Him into those bright and blessed scenes where He has gone. It is our privilege even now to follow Him to that resurrection platform as risen with Him, and to live with Him in those things in which

He lives unto God. But for this, our souls must be under the constraining power of His love, and in the enjoyment of the love of God as set forth in His death.

I have just one word more, see verses 31, 32 : "Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me." The question is, Are we to be dominated by the prince of this world? Are we to be swayed by those things which he presents—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? Or are we to be delivered from his power by the attractive influence of the love of Christ, that blessed One who has been lifted up, that by the love presented in Him He might draw all unto Himself.

The love expressed in the death of Christ becomes a new source of attraction for our hearts, and it is a great point in the history of a saint when for him the prince of this world becomes dethroned, when the things of this world lose their attraction, by the soul being under a greater power of attraction in the enjoyment of the love of Christ, who has been lifted up that He might draw us unto Himself.

The prince of this world dominates all who are still in the old condition. How blessed to be attracted, subdued and swayed by divine

love, so that the dominating influence of the prince of this world be broken, and we are free and happy to be swayed by love divine, and find the home of our hearts in that sphere of divine affections filled by the Father and the Son. This is the home of that new condition of life of which I have been speaking.

May God grant that we may be in the acceptance and appropriation of the death of Christ as that by which we have been morally ended, and enter more and more into that divine love that has been so fully expressed in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may be attracted to Himself in that heavenly sphere where He is, and live in that new condition which has been brought in and established in Himself.

E. W.



WHAT IS IN GLORY, AND WHAT IS HERE.

(JOHN XIII. 27-38.)

WHAT I desire to say a very few words upon, dear brethren, is the way in which God had ready the Man of His counsels, the Man of His resource, just at the very moment when the man who had occupied the platform all along from creation downward had utterly failed. I think that Judas in that respect sets forth to us what man after the flesh comes to in the most favoured circumstances. There he is placed under the most favoured circumstances of God's culture. No one outside the twelve was ever so favoured as Judas was ; he companied with the Lord, he had heard His words, he had seen His works. The inner life of the Lord Jesus in that respect was known to him as it was not known to any outside. He is referred to I suppose in those words " Mine own familiar friend that eateth bread with me." He represents man under the most complete culture of God, and what things come to under such culture.

The history as we all know was a very long one, and a consistent one from the very beginning. Man was tried in every possible circumstance. He was tried in innocence, tried without law, tried under law, put into the most favoured place as Israel was put, treated as the fig-tree was treated, "Let it alone this year also till I dig about it," &c. We have a very long history in regard to God's dealings with man, and the result is always the same, namely, utter breakdown.

I am speaking now to some who may take an interest in a little sketch of this kind, familiar as it is to most, I know. Man has been fully tested in every possible way and here is the result. And Judas I think sets forth the last phase of man under divine culture. A more awful exposure could not be presented to us. Here is a man who goes out after having taken the sop (a mark of confidence and friendship) to betray the very One who gave it to him. "And it was night."

I have no doubt we get a kind of moral picture presented to us here. That man goes out. That is precisely what has happened morally. There is an end of that man for God. That man has never come back again. He goes out and his history closes up in darkness, in night. Then we come to the resources of God.

God has got His Man all ready. How blessed that is! When Judas was gone out then Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." There He is! He stands out bright and clear before our souls as God's Man, and as glorified He comes out in all His beauty and blessedness. He stands out in His glory. There was a man there under the eye of God who was the complete contrast to the man who had gone out—One who had regard to God, who came to do His will here in the world, who did that will consistently and perfectly, who had no other in his mind, who could say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." That is the Man, the One upon whom the heavens could open, who was acknowledged as God's beloved Son. Never was a man like that, One who had brought into manhood, into this poor scene a relationship in which man had never stood. There had been nothing like that before! He is the Son of man and He is glorified. His glory comes out, as far as I understand it, in connection with His path here. He was come to do God's will even unto death. He came to close the history of that man who had gone out in judgment under the eye of God that all might be swept aside, and, as we have been hearing, that God might have a platform on which He could establish what is

for Himself. "God is glorified in him." What a wonderful picture that is! How beautiful and blessed! A Man in this scene who was here for God's pleasure and who was able to secure His glory in the very scene where man had hitherto done nothing but dishonour God. All that God is has been revealed in man in this world. All that He is has been sustained and vindicated in the face of what man is and all that Satan has brought in, and we know it. And while things go on apparently just as before, and the world goes on as if this had never been done, we are in the light of what has been done for God. There is a day coming when the whole scene will be publicly swept clear, when the man who has disgraced it will be swept from it, when everything will be according to God's pleasure. A universe of bliss is coming into view when everything will be according to God, and when one will shall control everything, when everything will revolve round one centre; but we are in the light now of what has taken place for God.

A Man has been glorified and God glorified in Him! That is a wonderful fact. And now we get the result in regard to this blessed Man. "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." A Man goes up into the glory of God.

We get the most amazing contrast between the man who goes out on this dreadful errand when it was night, and the Man who is glorified and who has glorified God, and whom God straightway glorifies and whom He puts before our souls as the One to fill our hearts while we are in a world like this.

It is a wonderful thing that we have the solution of the riddle as to all that is going on in this world, the scene of man's will, where the rights of God are still ignored. We know that God has been glorified, that every attribute of God has been vindicated, and that by a Man who has been here in this world for His glory. And we know where He is—in the glory of God—in a place where before He went there man never was. That is the great fact. He has opened up a heavenly sphere for us through death and resurrection, and if we want to reach it in our souls, as we have been hearing, we have to eat His flesh and drink His blood, to appropriate Him, and as we do so we find His place ours, His relationship ours, and the Spirit of God is sent down from heaven in order to bring our souls into the good of all this blessing.

There is just one other thing I would speak of. If the Lord Jesus as a Man has gone out of this scene, and has gone up to glory, there is something left here, and it is that which is

morally according to Himself. There is the company we hear so often spoken of. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." That is what is left behind. The Lord Jesus Christ has left that beautiful trace of Himself in this world. He has gone out of it, but He brought the love of God down into it, and has touched our hearts by what He brought down. He has gone away, but He has not taken the love of God away. It remains, and the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in us to make it good to us, to shed it abroad in our hearts. It is a wonderful thing; it touches our affections to see what the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought, how He glorified God, and how He has left behind what is morally according to Himself. I think we ought to be greatly exercised in regard to it. Failure has come in, the whole thing has broken up outwardly, that is quite true. There never will be seen again what has been seen, but I am sure we ought to be greatly exercised in regard to this commandment, the new commandment which He gave, that we should really discern the company and have our affections drawn out to it for this reason, that every one of them is dear to Christ. And if He has gone out of the world which of us does not want to get near Him? We are going to see Him. He is coming again to

receive us to Himself that where He is we may be also. It is our privilege to be on the look out for that, but what we have close at hand and what is our present privilege is to love one another as He has loved us. We see plenty of things about one another that are angular and trying: some one even ventured to speak about points and bristles, like the bristles of a hedgehog sticking out everywhere. It is no good to look at the failures but to the fact that they are dear to Christ, to see what is dear to Christ behind the bristles and what is angular, and if we could view things in that light a lot of difficulties would melt away. The power of divine love would come in and settle everything. It seems to me that is what we lack. I do not think I am exaggerating in saying we are greatly lacking in divine affections. If we could get near to Christ it would be easy enough for the affections to flow out.

How the Lord busied Himself with His poor disciples? How they misunderstood Him! Did not even know what He was talking about. Yet how the Lord occupied Himself with them spite of all. He took a towel and girded Himself and washed their feet, because He loved them. He loved His own which were in the world, and loved them unto the end. Now He says, "What I have done unto you, you

do also to one another." That is the only way in which people can see we are disciples if we love one another. That is the way of it. Love does not disregard defilement in another. I think it busies itself with the removal of it; but you have to begin with yourself. You cannot get near to the Lord without judging yourself, and then you find there are a great number of people in this world dear to Christ, and dear to you because they are dear to Him, and then the affections begin to flow, and saints get built up when the affections are right. A wonderful deal of building goes on then.

I am convinced of it, beloved brethren, that that is what is left behind by the Lord Jesus. Then Peter comes out at once. (Ver. 36.) Here is a man with points and angles, a man with a deal of self-confidence, though he was sincere and meant well; he would lay down his life for the Lord. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" the Lord says. He challenges him, and in love told him all the truth. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." Self-confidence had to come to the ground: the Lord could not uphold that; but how blessedly the Lord held what was dear to Him; and when the breakdown came and Peter had to be humbled,

the Lord still held him. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And the Lord looked at him just at the right moment, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord to him.

How beautiful to see the way the Lord in His deep affection occupied Himself about this poor man who did not know himself. Here was self-confidence in one who dearly loved the Lord; but it all got judged, and what was really of God remained, the love remains and the love comes out, and Peter gets built up, and he helps afterwards to build up others. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He strengthens his brethren with the same thing that strengthened him, divine love in activity.

May the Lord give us grace to know Himself better, to be attracted to Himself, the Man after God's own heart and pleasure, so that we may go out so deeply affected by what we learn in Him, that we may love those and be occupied with those who are dear to Him in this world.

D. L. H.



READING.

THE HEAVENLY CITY.

(REV. XXI.)

F. H. B. Are the two chief thoughts in connection with the city, light and government ?

F. E. R. Yes, I think so.

F. H. B. Is there any connection between the two ?

F. E. R. I think the light of the city becomes *really the glory of the kingdom.*

G. G. Is there any difference between the heavenly city in the kingdom and in the eternal state ?

F. E. R. You will find a number of details in regard to the city in the latter part of the chapter which you do not find in the city in the former part. There is no allusion to the throne or to government in connection with the eternal state. In verse 8 the narrative is brought up to the end, and then some details of the city in the millennial age are added.

QUES. Does the heavenly city come out twice ?

T. H. R. It descends out of heaven from God ; that is characteristic.

W. J. But is there such a thing as a city in the eternal state ?

T. H. R. No ; what is connected with the eternal state is the tabernacle.

QUES. What is the difference ?

T. H. R. The tabernacle is more the dwelling where God manifests Himself. The tabernacle of God is with men. The city is for administration and rule.

F. K. Is this the city that Abraham looked for ?

T. H. R. I believe he will find what he looked for in this city.

REMARKED. The communications he had from God must have led him to the world to come in his expectations.

F. C. Do you think this "looking" was the comment of the Spirit on what his expectation was ?

T. H. R. The point was that he would not have anything which was not *of God*. He had been called out of all that was of men ; he would not have any of the cities of Canaan, but only one whose builder and maker was God. The light may have been dim, but he had that thought, and it is an immense thing that *we* have what is of God.

W. J. I suppose the heavenly Jerusalem would be necessary to the earthly city, for what is alluded to in the psalms could not be carried out without ?

F. E. R. I think so. You do not get the introduction of a city on the part of God till it has come in on the part of man. You first get Babel, and then Abraham sought a city; so, too, at the end you get the angel first shewing to the apostle Babylon, the idolatrous city, and after the destruction of the idolatrous city the holy city comes into view. The first city was for the glory of man, and was to carry the name of man. In the heavenly city, God has a *name*; as the earthly Jerusalem is the city of the great King, so the heavenly city is the city of the living God.

F. H. B. I thought it was the revelation of the name of God that led Abraham to look for a city ?

F. E. R. Yes, and that revelation was made to him when he was separated from man. Man looks for a certain kind of stability, and a name in connection with it. The idea of a city is connected with imperialism. Nebuchadnezzar says, for instance: "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built for the honour of my majesty ?"

T. H. R. In Germany they are trying to

improve Berlin to make it worthy of an empire.

F. E. R. So too in England. London is the great imperial centre. People are not now content with a kingdom.

W. H. What is the idea of a country ?

F. E. R. Extent or expanse.

W. B. Is the heavenly city the church only ?

F. E. R. I thought so, because it is the bride.

W. B. Why then are the names of the twelve tribes in the gates ?

T. H. R. Because everything gets its character from the church. Israel's position by-and-by as the centre of God's government on earth hangs on the church being the vessel of heavenly rule. They have nothing until the co-heirs are in glory with Christ. The church is, so to speak, that which fills up everything which God has brought in. The heavenly city is the crown and keystone of all God's ways. You could not get the fulfilment of the promises to Israel unless the church was in glory. It is from the heavenly Jerusalem that the water of life flows out, and in it are the leaves of the tree for healing. All the hopes of Israel are held in the church in the present interval. You would not get government in grace apart from the heavenly city.

F. E. R. It is a great point that at the present time the hope of Israel is maintained

in the church. The church has that place when apparently all is gone for Israel. Israel has given up its own hope and place, and it is maintained in the church.

W. B. How ?

F. E. R. The firstfruits of Israel were gathered into the church. That remnant was the beginning of it. They did not give up the hope of Israel, and it is still maintained in the church.

F. H. B. Paul said he was standing for the hope of Israel.

F. E. R. And so are we. We do not get, or claim, the elder brother's portion. England has, in a sense, taken up the place of Israel in regarding herself as nationally a special object to God. We have to be content with the church's portion, and we can then stand for those who, for the time, have lost their hope. God does not allow anything of His to be lost. He maintains the truth of Israel in the church. The great mistake is connecting the idea of nationality with Christianity. The church has no part on earth. It is of the elder brother that it is said, "All that I have is thine."

A. P. Is it maintained in our having got the cup of the new covenant ?

F. E. R. Yes.

QUES. Does all distinction cease in the eternal state ?

F. E. R. Yes. The prominent idea there is the tabernacle of God, and it is with *men*, not with a nation. That goes back to God's original intention, *God and man together*. There will be no more sea, no more division of men into nations.

T. H. R. Heaven and earth will touch very closely; they communicate with each other in the eternal state.

W. J. What are the principal features of the city?

F. E. R. You get glory, light, walls, gates. And these are things that ought to characterise us now, for where the church has failed we never get its witness restored, and faith goes on to what is to come; there is no good in looking back, but if you go on to the future you return to original principles and get power to hold what God set up at the outset; you are effective in the present, for you seek to maintain in the present what will come out in the future. In principle there can be no difference between what will come out in the heavenly city and what marked the church at the outset as witness. You get the glory mentioned before you get the light, and the light before the other details which are characteristic.

QUES. What is the thought connected with the glory of God?

F. E. R. You get it in 2 Corinthians iv. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is the effulgence of God shining out in all that God is, in His own moral lustre and perfection; not merely the revelation of God. It includes the fulfilment of prophecy. It is like what you get in Hebrews i. of the Son. It says, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power."

QUES. What is, "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

F. E. R. "Her shining" would be a better word, it is her reflection. It is a moral idea; when God comes out He sets aside all the glory of man and brings out His own glory. It is no longer God acting under a veil of providence, He comes out as to all that He is.

QUES. What is "her shining"?

F. E. R. The glory of God lightens it, for the shining of it forth. A precious stone only *reflects* light, it has none in itself. Put it in a dark place, and you see no shining. It is the same word as in Philippians, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

QUES. Will the shining of the city be expressive of God?

F. E. R. Yes, that is what it is, it is reflected light.

QUES. Is that the glory of the Father?

F. E. R. It is more the thought of *God*, the glory of God. Each person of the Godhead has His own glory. It is a great thing to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," and what follows on that is, that all before Him must be *according* to His glory. We can rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but we are not prepared for it save as we are according to it. There is a great deal in us which is not according to that glory, and so we come under discipline, and the fact that we come under discipline proves that we are not according to God's glory; when we are, there will not be any more discipline. When the heavenly city comes out, all in it is according to God Himself. Adam in Eden was not unsuitable to the glory of God, but he was hardly according to it. I anticipate the glory now though I am not yet according to it, and if I did not cherish the expectation of it I could not rejoice in it. The knowledge that we shall be according to the glory of God enables us to rejoice in the hope of it. "It is not yet manifested what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we

shall see him as he is." It is certain that if God displays His glory what is before Him must be according to it. We have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, which is the source of all, and God is working now that we may be morally according to His glory. Israel will be lightened by the glory of God, so too the nations, but the church is that which alone *has* the glory of God, because it alone is completely suitable to it.

QUES. "To him be glory in the church throughout all ages." Is that because all in her is suitable to it?

F. E. R. Yes. That is what is seen in the city.

T. H. R. In Old Testament times the glory was concealed behind the veil, no one could walk in the light of it, and the priests were driven out, for things were not according to that glory.

A. H. All that is to be known of God by-and-by will be known through the church.

D. L. H. Is that the fulness of Him that filleth all in all? Ephesians i. 23.

F. E. R. That is connected with Christ and the bride idea. "Gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Afterwards we see the church filled unto all the fulness of God. The point is to be in the light of the city *now*; God is going to display His

glory and the church will be according to it, and we ought to be deeply exercised to be according to it *now*. There is no use in speaking of rejoicing in hope of the glory of God if we are not exercised as to being according to it now, which means having the light of the heavenly city before us. We wait the appearing of that glory. See Titus ii. 12, 13, "We are to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Man's glory—everything of man is really childish in a moral point of view. When you take a moral survey of things, all here—all that is connected with the glory of man seems very poor.

QUES. How will the glory be manifested by-and-by?

T. H. R. It is really the church which forms the wealth of God's glory. It is wonderful to think of that when God speaks of "the riches of his glory."

W. J. What are the walls of the city?

F. E. R. The idea in them is that of exclusion, it does not mean security; the city is exclusive by the very nature of it; all worldliness, all impurity, all that is contrary to God is excluded by the very nature of what the city is. If you want holiness that is how you get it. Holiness

is to be promoted because of the fact that we are to be "Holy and without blame before him in love." And again, "You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight." We want the walls great and high to be before God holy and unblameable.

QUES. How is that promoted now?

F. E. R. By the knowledge of God's holy love. No other way is possible. Love is exclusive *because* it is holy.

F. C. The walls are *part of the city*, not encircling it, and in the very nature of things it excludes all that is not of God.

F. E. R. People are slow to get hold of great divine ideas, what they do is to take up texts of scripture and sentiments.

J. R. Do not you think that the glory disperses all that is contrary to it?

F. E. R. Well, I should not like to be dispersed then, I should rather the dispersion took place now.

QUES. How is what is contrary dispersed?

F. E. R. By discipline. God disciplines us now to remove what is not according to His glory. There will not be discipline then. Discipline is the expression of perfect love. No

one would desire to be without it, because so conscious of needing it.

QUES. Is it in view of light?

F. E. R. It is to make room for it. It is *children* whom God chastens, there is no chastening for sons. The distinction between children and sons is extremely nice, one merges into the other, but there *is* a shade of distinction. We are children now and in the light of sonship. Sonship is connected with the divine purpose. In the sanctuary you are come to the place of sonship. Children come under the discipline of God, and God does not pass over anything in His children, and no right-minded child would want to escape discipline. It is that we should be "partakers of His holiness."

QUES. In Hebrews xii. it asks, "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

F. E. R. That is a quotation from the Old Testament. "Let my son go, that he may *serve* me" is the idea of a son—"that he may *serve* me."

QUES. Is this cry for imperialism a sign of the times?

F. E. R. It cannot come out fully until the church is gone. God started with the rule of the heavens, and nothing will be right here until the rule of heaven comes in morally. Then everything will be set right on earth.

You will not have one bit of the glory of man there. The appearing of the glory of God will wither up all the glory of man.

T. H. R. With regard to the New Jerusalem J. N. D. has said that it is remarkable that you do not see any one. You see the city and the glory of God. Though the names of the twelve apostles are there, not one of the names are given. So we are told that the names of the twelve tribes were on the breastplate of the high priest, but we are not told their names.

F. E. R. The fact is, all is so perfectly balanced of God, there can be no room for human prominence.

A. P. How does the promise to the Philadelphian overcomer come in here? (Rev. iii. 12.)

F. E. R. It is remarkable that in the last three churches Christ presents Himself in characteristics which are either moral or are connected with the kingdom, and carry you on to the kingdom. In Thyatira you come to the end of the church, and from that point onward Christ presents Himself in other lights. In the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia we get, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." The church

has failed, and therefore there is the looking forward to the kingdom. What enables any one to maintain now is seeing God's idea. One wants to be characterised by "the city of my God" *now*.

QUES. Why is there no temple in the city?

F. E. R. There is nothing to enshrine because God is everything. One part is as holy as another. It is wonderful that we shall be able to bear God's glory, and shall be in the presence of that glory with exceeding joy. We ought to be under its power now, and nothing less than that satisfies the new man.

F. H. B. What is the force of the expression, when the kingdom is delivered up, "God shall be all in all"?

T. H. R. When everything is subdued God morally will fill all. He will fill His own creation.

W. J. Is that the idea in "the tabernacle of God is with men"?

F. E. R. Yes.

QUES. What is the force of "God being all in all"—is it power?

F. E. R. It is nature, life, and that is *love*. God is all in all. Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Son is subject, the Spirit is pervading, as Mr. Darby says, "By the Spirit all pervading."

A. C. What is the force of the kings of the earth bringing their glory to it ?

F. E. R. I think they recognise the church in its own proper place in relation to God and the Lamb. It is in that way that God connects Himself mediately with the world to come, and the church has that place as the vessel of the glory.

QUES. Do the nations derive their glory from it ?

F. E. R. I do not know ; you cannot separate the church from Christ. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." But the Lamb's wife shares all that belongs to the Bridegroom, and that brings in an important point—that as the bride we ought to be faithful to the Bridegroom, and properly to lose our own interests in those of the Bridegroom. The "husband will be known in the gates" in that day, and He should be known there now. Union is with the exalted Man, association is with the Son of God.

QUES. Is union future ?

F. E. R. Not altogether. "The Spirit and the Bride say come" now. The sanctuary brings in the thought of association with Christ, and is in one sense a greater thing than union. Ephesians i. is association—sonship. (See ver. 5.) In association you are with Him as the Son of God.

You never can be *united* to the Son of God as such. Union is with the exalted Man. Mr. Stoney brought that out: I did not see the force of it at the time. Sonship brings you into association with the Son of God.

REMARKED. Then association must be something higher than what we get here.

F. E. R. Yes; Mr. Darby pointed out that to be placed in association with Christ is greater than what you get here—greater than to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, though there could not be association without union. In the bride idea you are united to Christ, but in sonship you are with Him as His companions in the presence of the Father.



READING.

CHRIST AS HEAD OF EVERY MAN.

(ROM. v. 12, &c.)

F. E. R. We get here the mode in which God's grace has reached man ; it is by one Man, and what has come in at the present time by the gospel is the test of all men ; the gift of grace by one Man.

QUES. In what way ?

F. E. R. In the sense that everything is resolved by it—what is for God, and what is not for God is all resolved by the question of the grace of God, and His gift by grace. It fills up responsibility.

QUES. The "True light that lighteth every man," &c. Is it like that ?

F. E. R. Yes. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Christ is become the test of man ; the state and condition is exposed. The final result is brought about

by it. "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. iv. 6.)

QUES. What does that verse mean?

F. E. R. It presents an alternative; it is the effect of the gospel. On the one hand it completes the ground of responsibility, but on the other its reception results in living according to God in the Spirit, the judgment is accepted on what they are as men in the flesh. "Them that are dead," that is, they had filled up their course on earth either for good or for evil. It is a great point to apprehend that Christ has become the test. Everything is brought to an issue over Christ. If God has introduced all blessing through one Man, the question is, how men receive the testimony of it. "One righteousness towards all unto justification of life."

QUES. Is there not an alternative headship? An unconverted man would be under Adam as head?

F. E. R. There is no headship of Adam, Christ is head of every man. Adam was the figure of Him who was to come, it is no longer the figure, but the One figured.

The grace of God, and the gift by grace is by one Man Jesus Christ. He is head of every

man; "Lord" expresses authority. Adam had not authority exactly over his fellow men, but all took their character from him. The head stands in relation to all, and his acts have their bearing upon the whole family. Man was left without a head when Adam died; eventually nationality came in, and confusion—there was no head.

QUES. But the head transmits his qualities to the race?

F. E. R. The bearing of what takes place in the head is toward all. Christ has taken up that place in regard of man, and so the bearing of all He has brought in is towards all. "The many" is in contrast to the few who were under law. As far as I understand the matter, headship was the only possible way in which God could approach man in grace. Reconciliation could not take place except by the introduction of a Head.

QUES. Is that what comes out in the beginning of Luke?

F. E. R. Yes. The instant the Head was there, reconciliation was in principle there. Man under the judgment of God could not as such be reconciled, all that God could do was to judge him. It was a moral impossibility for reconciliation to take place in him; there was nothing for that man but death;

reconciliation comes in, in the introduction of a Head.

The thought of reconciliation between man and man is very different from reconciliation as between God and man, because man is the creature of God. Think of the condition in which man was by the fall ! Under sentence of death, and therefore it was an impossibility for that man to be reconciled. The righteous judgment of God must have its place, and reconciliation involves the introduction of another man ; that is where the truth of the Head comes in. You must have a Man, who is great enough to take up the liabilities of every man : that all may have their part in that death and receive life from Him. God finds His pleasure in one Man, and that Man stands in relation towards all men ; believers stand as objects of the pleasure of God in that Man. " We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

It is possible to preach to men the benefits of the death of Christ without preaching Christ Himself.

There can be no illustration of reconciliation in human things, because in human things you can never have the relation that exists between God and man.

QUES. When did man come under the new Headship ?

F. E. R. When the new Head came in. You now present the Head to man ; you testify of reconciliation. When Christ came, there was a point of complacency in man for God, and the One in whom the complacency rests stands in relation to all men ; all that is in the Head is available for men. "To him give all the prophets witness," &c.—the Head.

QUES. What is the difference between presenting the Head and the Saviour ?

F. E. R. The Head is the Saviour. In a general way in the New Testament, God is presented as the Saviour.

Every man is under the Head, but all do not acknowledge the Head ; they do not care to accept the truth ; but Christ is the test of every man.

There cannot be two heads. The one Head has died and passed away ; if men do not accept the Headship of Christ, they virtually claim to stand on their own platform ; they refuse to stand on the new platform.

QUES. What is the difference between Head of every man and Head of the church ?

F. E. R. The church stands in relation to Christ, not only He in relation to her. The

moment you accept the Head, you stand in relation to Him.

In Romans v. it is not a question of a new race, but of the Head that has come in. Reconciliation in the bearing of it is towards all men, "Be ye reconciled to God." It may be a long time before a Christian is prepared to enter into reconciliation, but the bearing of it is towards all men. So, too, as to the new covenant. There is nothing in the new covenant but what is the disposition of God towards all men; not towards a special people, though He may make the covenant effective in special ones.

The governing thought in all preaching should be to present Christ. Philip "preached Christ in Samaria." "*By him* all that believe are justified." It is not a question of a new race, but of the grace and blessing that are by one Man towards all men.

J. N. D. has said: "You could go to a man in the street and tell him he ought to answer to his Head."

QUES. What is denying the Lord who bought them?

F. E. R. Those who do so are apostate. Christianity is death to the old condition, and you count yourself alive in Christ. You accept Him as Head, you get the Spirit—living water from the Head; you count yourself alive in the

Head. Only a man who has the Spirit can do that.

In Romans vi. you may note the change from "through" to "in" Christ.

It would have been useless for a Head for man to come in, if he could not impart life to man. The qualification of Christ to be Head is that He can impart life to man. He is a life-giving Spirit. This is seen in the breathing in John xx.

Everybody ought to see that it was impossible for God to approach man *as man*, in grace, apart from Christ, because he was under His judgment.

The wisdom of God is that He brings in a Head who can impart living water to man after having taken up the liabilities of man. You are now alive in the Head, and dead to all you were once alive in.

In *that* Man God can address every man. Christ is the test; souls come in contact with a *Person*, not simply with a *doctrine*. The great end in view on God's part is that man might live. Christ must take up the question raised in the tree of responsibility that He may become the tree of life.

John iii. 16 presents the divine thought of eternal life for man.

John iv. is the way in which the believer is to come into it. The person who is to have it is the believer, but he does not get at it by faith.

The question of good and evil is solved in the cross (chap. iii.), and then (chap. iv.) Christ is a life-giving Spirit.

He is, too, the Sun of righteousness, and it is by walking in relation to Christ that you walk in the path of God's will. It is not possible that man is going to be without rule, the law of Christ. It is as moving in relation to Christ—as married to Him—that you can walk in the path of God's will down here, and bring forth fruit to God. In the gospel man is called upon to accept the Head; it is the divinely-appointed relationship, and God could not approach man in grace in any other way. He might have approached him in judgment.

You accept Christ as Head, you appropriate Him as Lord. Salvation is connected with the Lord. Romans x. is on that line; you confess Him as Lord; it is the habit of the person, and in this way you are delivered from every other Lord.

In connection with lordship you get two lines—administration and subduing power on the one hand, and authority and judgment on the other. If you confess Christ as Lord, you get deliverance from the power of evil.

Acts ix. is full of the administration and subduing power of the Lord, it is magnificent. He subdues Saul to Himself; He directs Ananias;

cities turn to the Lord ; it even goes on to a kind of millennial picture at the end of the chapter.

In Romans x. 1 you believe that Christ is raised from the dead ; verse 2, you confess Him as Lord. Salvation is connected with the Lord.

With Israel in Egypt you get righteousness in connection with the blood on the lintel and side-posts. Being brought through the Red Sea was salvation.

Romans x. brings into prominence salvation rather than righteousness. It is in submitting to righteousness that man gets salvation. Israel did not go the right way for salvation. The way to salvation is to believe to righteousness ; you submit to the righteousness of God.

Baptism is in the name of Jesus as Lord.

The "*heart*" (Rom. x. 10) connects you with the Head ; the "*mouth*" with the Lord. Confession is the proof of faith.

Christ was a life-giving Spirit when on earth, but He must take up man's liabilities before He could give life to man. Christ's presence was in anticipation of His work, and God could take up things as though the work were accomplished. God could go on different ground. Why did He not impute trespasses ? Because Christ was going to take them up. The thought of eternal

life hardly connects itself with heaven, but you lose nothing by going to heaven.

QUES. "To know thee," &c., John xvii. ?

F. E. R. That is not heaven; knowledge is always in measure and passes away; when we get to heaven there is no knowledge.

Eternal life is the energy of life and blessing in Christ, which renders impotent all the forces of evil.

The energy of life in Christ brings profound relief and blessing to man.



THE TRUE GROUND OF PRIESTHOOD.

(NUM. xvii.; xviii. 1-7.)

WE have to remember that all the things written aforetime were written for our learning. They were not written for the time in which they happened, but for our instruction.

The immediate occasion of what we get in chapter xvii. concerning the priesthood was the gainsaying of Korah. This is referred to in Jude 11, in which we are given prophetically in a few words the moral progress of defection in Christendom. We get three landmarks of declension clearly stated:

- 1, Gone in the way of Cain;
- 2, Run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward; and
- 3, Perished in the gainsaying of Core.

The climax presents the final state of corruption in Christendom, that in which it *has* perished. That word "perished" often occurs in the New Testament as representing a state of apostasy. "Son of perdition" is the same idea. Christendom has accepted and settled down in a condition of things in which morally it has perished, and there is no hope of its recovery.

The sin of Korah was that the Levites claimed the priesthood. Now for priesthood there must be two qualifications: the call to it, and the grace suited to the call, and both from God. Korah claimed the priesthood without either the call or the grace for it. His company claimed it as Levites, and he and his house all perished by the fire of God. They were put to the test by the offering of incense. (See vers. 16-22.)

The Levites were properly *servants*—their call was not to the worship of God, but to the carrying of the tabernacle and its vessels. The Levites were dependent for direction on the priests, but they had nothing to do with the handling of the holy vessels. Now Korah and his company ignored this, and assuming priestly work, the judgment of God overtook them; and in the next chapter (chap. xviii.) God gives the proof and attestation of priesthood.

The budding and blossoming of Aaron's rod did not give Aaron title to priesthood, it was God's call which gave him title to it, and no doubt with the call he received the grace suited to the call, which sustained him in it. The budding of the rod was the *attestation* of his priesthood, and it signified life out of death (or resurrection in principle), as the witness and power of the priesthood. The people were so

affected by it that they were overcome with fear, and exclaimed: "Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish." They felt that to come near the tabernacle was death to them, and they were right; for flesh and for rebellious man it presented death.

Now in chapter xviii. God lays down the relative places of priests and Levites. There the Lord speaks to *Aaron*, not to *Moses*. The responsibility of the tabernacle and of its service fell upon Aaron and his sons. The Levites had the bearing of the tabernacle—only they were not to come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary lest they should die. I think in this there was an expression of grace on the part of God, for they had offended, and offended grievously. God in His grace did not set the Levites aside, but assigned to them their proper place with regard to Aaron the priest and the tabernacle, and after this, He says: "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death."

Now the question for us is, What instruction do we get from all this? In our day we have certainly come to the gainsaying of Core. There is around us the exclusive claim to priesthood by those who are in the responsibility of ministers. Now the first question I should ask of such is, "Shew me your call;" and the next would be,

“Have you the grace for the call?” If you have not these, then you are in rebellion. That is the position of the clergy of the present day. I do not suppose people have any idea of what an awful thing the principle of clergy is in the eye of God. It represents the apostate condition into which Christianity has lapsed. The activities of the Spirit of God are not exercised through it but *in spite* of it. God’s thought of priesthood is to be found only in life out of death. Now this proof of priesthood is seen only in Christ. It says in Hebrews vii. 15, 16: “There ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life!” The fact of an endless life in man is brought to pass in resurrection, and that is in Christ. The foundation of priesthood is in death, and the attestation of it in resurrection. There can be *no* priest but on the principle of life out of death. You get this set forth in type in Aaron.

But the thought of priesthood is not limited to Aaron: there were also his sons, who were joined with him in the priesthood; so in order to get a complete idea of priesthood, we must take in Aaron and his sons, that is, not only Christ, but Christ and the church.

Now I want to bring this out in connection

with the truth that God has appointed a Head for man, and that, in the Man who has accomplished righteousness; and in the Head we get One who communicates living water to man.

In all this we have the expression of the grace of God towards man. Every man is tested by the introduction of a Head, and it is according to the thought of God that any and every man should come to Christ and get from Him living water. Righteousness and life in the Head are God's thought for *every* man. If I have apprehended the Head, and have received from the Head righteousness and living water, there follows another thing, and that is that I recognise the call of God. If you turn to Romans viii. 34, you will see that this passage brings in the thought of Christ's priesthood, and that is for the elect. "Who also maketh intercession for us," *not* for everybody and anybody.

At first a believer knows nothing of the call of God, but a moment arrives in the history of the Christian when he is bound to recognise that he is called of God. "Whom he called, them he also justified." When we have received the Spirit, we recognise that we are subjects of the sovereign mercy of God. Why do you love God? Because He first loved you.

Now what I have said is in connection with Christ as Head. In accepting the Head, you get

righteousness in Him and the gift of living water, and then you find that God first loved you, and that He has called you.

Now the next point is, what are you called to? All saints are not called to the same thing. Israel was called to national blessing; we are not called to that; it is evident from Romans viii. 29 that we are called to sonship. God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren; on our part—that we should be in association with His Son. Christ is Firstborn, that is pre-eminent among many brethren. God has seen fit so to call us. I cannot explain it, and I would not question it. God has been pleased so to call us that we should be in association with His Son as the Firstborn among many brethren. Priesthood comes in in connection with this, and we have thus the fulfilment of the type of Aaron and his sons. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I praise thee.”

Now if a man says he is a priest, I would ask him on what ground. If you are a priest you must have received the call of God, to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. There you get the first requisite of a priest, and a layman may be that; saints have been called to it,

and the proof of it is that they love God by the Spirit of God. Any Christian that recognises the call of God can say he is a priest.

Priesthood hangs upon sonship. Christ is priest because He is Son. We too are sons, and so we are priests.

The next thing is, the *grace* suited to the call to priesthood. Korah and his sons had neither the call nor the grace suited to it. Nor have those who assume the priesthood in Christendom to-day—that is the clergy; if they had, they would not assume the official position.

If you desire to see what the grace suited to the call is, turn to Ephesians ii. 13, "You are become nigh in Christ Jesus." And further, in verse 18, "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here we get the antitype of Aaron—Christ, and through Him by the Spirit we have access, so that you have not only the call, but the grace for the call.

We get the same in principle also in John xx., where the Lord, after He had said, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God," breathes on the disciples and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." We have here the antitype of Aaron and his sons. We are in association with Christ as the Firstborn among many brethren, and have access to the Father, through

the Spirit. Christ communicated the Spirit that we might have access: we could not have it without the Spirit.

Now the proof of priesthood is life out of death. The principle on which priesthood hangs is resurrection, for we cannot be in association with the Son of God except on the platform of life out of death, that is, on resurrection ground. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Christ has been pleased to enter on that ground, and association with Him cannot be on any other. No one can be a priest except on that ground. All assumption of priesthood otherwise is an imposture.

You may reply, "But we are down here on earth, how can we then be in life out of death?" If you turn to Colossians ii. 12, 13 you get two thoughts, one that we are risen together with Christ, and the other that we are quickened together with Him. Both expressions have reference to life out of death. Each has its own particular bearing, but always quickening is associated with life out of death.

Even as regards Christ it says, "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Now as risen with Christ we are men of another order, we belong neither to Jew nor Gentile. Quickening results in a power of affec-

tion in the heart of the Christian which can carry him superior to distinctions that exist in the flesh. There can be no distinctions of flesh in the presence of Christ. As quickened with Christ my slave is as dear to me as any other. This can only be in the power of spiritual affection in the presence of Christ. "Ye have put on the new man where there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. iii. 10.) Every order of man has disappeared save Christ.

We have had before us, first, the call; second, the grace in the saints suited to the call, and the proof of the call. Now return to Numbers xviii. 7, "Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office I have given unto you your priest's office as a service of gift, and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." In chapter xvii. 12, 13 the children of Israel had said, "Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish," &c. When the flesh comes into the presence of these things there is *death* before it, and so it must be, and we must accept death as to the flesh, for association with Christ is an end to all the things in which flesh lives. When the people saw the rod of Aaron budding, they recognised something too great for them. God is not served by man after the flesh. What is going on around us is mockery of God who is

not served, and cannot be by man as such. The very things in which life towards God consists, are death to the flesh. None can serve God but those alive out of death.

There is another thing, the priests come under the iniquity of the sanctuary; that is, we feel the state of things in Christendom by which we are surrounded. We come under the burden of it and are susceptible now to the discipline of God.

There is one thing further. The Levites were to be joined to the priests for the particular service to which God had called them; and now, there is no true Levitical service apart from the priest.

In our day we have come in Christendom to the state of things represented by the gain-saying of Korah, and if we would be in the truth of priesthood according to God, we must find out the ground on which priesthood rests.

Then we have to carry on our hearts the burden of the state of things in which the saints of God are found around us.

I have presented things which may not be quite intelligible to all, but if you consider the principles I have indicated you will find something that may be of help.

F. E. R.

Chippenham, May 29.

READING.

THE CONDITIONS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE DOWN HERE.

(HEB. IX. 11-28.)

F. E. R. I suggested this passage that we might get an idea of the conditions in which, as Christians, we live here; for in living even in a natural way you must live under certain conditions; and so in spiritual things there are conditions in which we live. It is under the New Testament that we live. The testament brings out the conditions in which man can live in regard to God.

J. W. B. Does that come out in this chapter?

F. E. R. Well, there is purgation and the inheritance in verses 14, 15.

REMARKED. Then the new covenant brings out the conditions?

F. E. R. Yes, and because it sets forth the love and mercy of God.

F. C. So that just as it is essential for us to have air and food as the conditions of natural life, we need the love and mercy of God as the conditions of our spiritual life.

F. E. R. Yes. The conditions of spiritual life are the love and mercy of God.

A. J. P. Do the conditions involve Christianity?

F. E. R. Not exclusively, for the same conditions will apply to the Jew by-and-by.

Two things come out in the chapter: first, the blood of the new covenant for purgation; and secondly, the death of the testator and the validity of the testament.

J. W. B. What is the idea of the covenant being connected with blood?

F. E. R. The covenant could not be made without blood—the blood of purgation.

J. W. B. In the first covenant the people were sprinkled with blood.

F. E. R. Yes; that was in figure purgation, for you cannot get the idea of purgation without blood.

F. C. Was not the covenant the closing up of one condition of things and the opening up of another?

F. E. R. Yes. In human things if the father of a family dies and leaves a will, all is changed

and the family then have to live according to the conditions of the will.

A. H. Does the blood come in here as removing the former state of sins ?

F. E. R. Yes ; it is purgation. You could not come into the good of the new covenant without purgation.

J. W. B. What are the heavenly things ?

F. E. R. Christianity brings in heavenly things.

E. J. D. Is it heavenly things on earth ?

F. E. R. Well, that is what Christianity is. We have to live in the good of God, and the practical life of Christianity is in the revelation of God as He has made Himself known in Christ. The cup which we bless is the new covenant in Christ's blood.

QUES. What does that signify ?

F. E. R. The disposition of God, which has come out in the death of Christ. Our state has become the occasion for God to make Himself known.

H. T. I thought that God commended His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Is there not a different disposition towards us now as saints ?

F. E. R. How ?

H. T. He loves us now as His sons, He loves us as He loves the Son.

F. E. R. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us. The love that God commends to us is the love that is shed abroad in our hearts, and that is the love that was expressed in the death of Christ. He commends His love towards us who are now Christians. He loved us *in spite* of our being sinners, not *as* sinners, but *when* we were sinners.

A. J. P. Would you say that all we know now of the love of God was involved in the first expression of that love ?

F. E. R. Yes ; God always begins at the top. He speaks the best thing from the outset. He speaks from Himself—from the top.

F. C. Are there not many who never get beyond the fact of God's love to them as sinners ?

F. E. R. But there is a root error there. They think that God loved them *as* sinners.

H. T. What is the fact ?

F. E. R. That He loved them *though* they were sinners—in *spite* of it.

F. C. Is there not a condition of soul in which a believer never gets beyond what a convert of a few weeks old has ?

F. E. R. Yes ; and the reason is, they rest in statements of scripture instead of in the Spirit of God. His object is to get souls into the sense

of His love, and it is in His house that God is known.

QUES. How do we come into the house? Is it by baptism?

F. E. R. No; by the Spirit. Baptism brings people into the precincts of the house, "the court without" (Rev. xi.); but it is the Spirit which brings you *into* the house of God.

J. W. B. But you would not occupy people with the Spirit within them?

F. E. R. But the Spirit *is* in you shedding abroad the love of God.

A. J. P. Is not the Spirit objective?

F. E. R. How?

A. J. P. You look to Him as a Person to lead you.

F. E. R. Yes, and He is a divine Person.

F. C. I have been greatly impressed of late with the fact of how very much we have overlooked the importance of the Holy Ghost.

F. E. R. I am glad to hear you say that! The Spirit is the great power of Christianity.

A. S. L. Are not all baptised people in the house?

F. E. R. Infants are not in the house. By baptism they are brought into the precincts of the house where the Spirit dwells.

A. S. L. I have always understood that

baptism brought into the house. Has it not always been taught in that way ?

F. E. R. It appears to me that Christ is the Builder of the house. No one could be in the house without the Spirit, for it is a spiritual house.

A. S. L. Then you do not look at two aspects of the house ?

F. E. R. No. I recognise what is *called* a "great house," that is, Christendom—the result of man's work.

H. T. Judgment begins at the house of God ?

F. E. R. Well, that is as Christians.

H. T. How ?

F. E. R. Look at the passage, 1 Peter iv. 16, "If any man suffer as a Christian." Then, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ? Therefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their soul to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator." If judgment begins at the house of God, it means judgment coming in, in the way of discipline, as regards Christians.

QUES. Then you do not regard Simon Magus as being in the house ?

F. E. R. No, indeed ! *Christ is the Builder* of God's house, and what He builds is a spiritual house.

QUES. In what sense are servants builders ?

F. E. R. They build up Christianity.

H. T. Then you would not object to saying they are in the assembly ?

F. E. R. No.

F. C. Then the house of God in the sense you speak of is as much the pillar and ground of the truth as ever ?

F. E. R. Yes, indeed. I think Christ built the house of God, and the house of God abides which Christ built, and it is the pillar and ground of the truth. The apostle took up an assembly as he found it, and he had misgivings about many in it, but underneath all, the house is there ; there may be external confusion, but underneath all the confusion there is the house, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.

F. C. What is the difference between the body and the house ? We used to think that the house was the external thing, and the body the real and internal thing.

F. E. R. I think we have let down too much the ideas of the house ; the house is for God and the body is for Christ. The house is the tabernacle of God. In Colossians we get the body ; in Ephesians the idea is more of the house.

F. C. We were in the habit of regarding the external view of the house to be that which man

built, and the internal—the body, that which Christ built, the true thing.

F. E. R. What I would maintain is, that though confusion has come in, the house abides as the true thing.

A. S. L. What is the difference between the house and the temple ?

F. E. R. They are much the same ; the temple is the shrine. Christ, when He was here, prepared the materials, and the Spirit given by Him on the day of Pentecost recognised the work of Christ and took up His abode there ; and the house has been a complete thing ever since.

W. T. What is “ Groweth unto an holy temple ” ?

F. E. R. That is, it is growing up to the time of display.

A. H. What is being builded up a spiritual house ?

F. E. R. It is in coming to Christ as the Son of the living God, and so you are built up.

F. C. You think the house was there at Pentecost, and that the Spirit came and took possession of a complete thing ?

F. E. R. Yes. Christ as Son of David built the house.

A. J. P. Was the house there before the body ?

F. E. R. No ; the Spirit formed the body.

A. J. P. Would you say the presence of the Spirit constituted the house ?

F. E. R. Well, all was there, and it only needed that the Spirit should take up His abode.

A. H. Then you do not think there are two aspects of the house ?

F. E. R. I do not ; what led me to think about the matter was the passage in Hebrews iii., " Whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." They were recognised as the house on that condition. Christ is the Builder, and saints are proved to be the house of God if they hold fast.

QUES. But you would admit that there is a great house ?

F. E. R. Yes ; there is a great, pretentious thing which is likened to a great house, but I look on the house as really God's children—His household, His family.

QUES. What is building wood, hay and stubble ?

F. E. R. But that is not into the house at all. I think God brings people into His house that He may instruct them. People in system get little instruction because they do not recognise the presence of the Spirit in God's house ; those who do, have got great gain. What hinders us is the attempt, and that especially on the part of

the young, to drag in the world. They have been brought up in connection with the assembly, and have come in without much exercise or opposition, and they, it may be unwittingly, bring the world in with them, and if we do not look out we shall be swamped by it.

A. H. We need to live in the conditions of life.

F. E. R. Yes, "walking worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

A. S. L. Where does baptism bring you to?

F. E. R. Into the precincts of the house, and it involves leaving the world. By baptism you come into the place of profession; it brings a child there, for it is to be brought up in the nurture and discipline of the Lord. It is a great point for me that there can be nothing really here for God at the present time outside of the Spirit, except responsibility.

To return to our subject. We cannot live now except within the limits which Christ has imposed upon those who are in God's habitation; these are the love and mercy of God. Solomon imposed upon Shimei certain limitations within

which to live. If he went beyond them it was death. Christians often expect that they are to be prospered in this world.

W. J. That is perhaps why people are unhappy?

F. E. R. Yes, they do not live in the conditions of the new covenant, that is, the love and mercy of God.

A. H. Do you not think that people live too much down here in the conditions of this life instead of in those of the house of God?

F. E. R. Yes, and they are hardly as happy as people in the world, because they are not in the good of either the world or the covenant.

H. T. Why do you bring in the love and mercy of God?

F. E. R. Because God says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more"; and He will write His laws in their hearts.

It is a wonderful thing to be in the sense of divine mercy—vessels of mercy. Mercy carries you on to glory. "Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." "Vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory."

H. T. I should like to ask our brother C—— as to what the light is he has got lately regarding the Spirit?

F. C. It is that I am impressed by the fact that people have overlooked the truth that there is a *Divine* Person on earth, and that we are in the good and power of the presence of that Person here.

Devizes, May 30th.

