

The Disciple whom Jesus Loved,

AND

HIS SEVENFOLD MINISTRY

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TO THE READER.

The writer of this little book is fully conscious that, in its pages, he will be travelling over ground which has already been made familiar by seekers after truth, of whom the number could not be counted.

Such, however, is the greatness and the variety of the subjects involved that he feels confident that the Lord can bring out of every fresh study of them something that is new, something that has not been noticed before. And it is encouraging to remember that even that which is old and familiar is sweet, when it is brought forth with the fragrance of Christ upon it.

May this fragrance not be lacking in that which may now be presented for the reader's consideration !

FOLKESTONE,

January, 1906.

“ WHERE DWELLEST THOU ? ”

“ COME AND SEE.”

There is, perhaps, no feature in the writings of the beloved disciple so striking as their unique combination of grandeur and simplicity. For example, where is there a presentation of the Son of God, within the limits of scripture, so profound and wonderful as that which is unfolded to us in the Gospel and 1st Epistle of John? And yet how simple and homely the language! Even the very simplest believer, whose heart is true to Christ, can find in these writings an inexhaustible supply of spiritual joy and refreshment in the contemplation of the divine personality of Him of whom the Apostles could say that they had “ beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.”

If we refer, for a moment, to the Apostle himself—so signally marked off, as he was, by the greatness of the revelations which were committed to him—the only claim he ever made for distinction is embodied in words which a child might have uttered, “ The

disciple whom Jesus loved
which also leaned on His breast at supper,
and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth
Thee?

It would be deeply interesting to go more into the details of this side of the subject, but the little which has been said is perhaps sufficient to illustrate the moral suitability of the Lord's choice of such a servant. All truth is necessarily outside the range and grasp of mere mind; but, for the unfolding of such truth as that of which John is the exponent, there seems an especial fitness in the fact that the vessel selected for it should be one who evidently had nothing to boast of except the deep and unchanging love of his Master. It was no point with him that he loved Jesus, but that Jesus loved him. In this intimacy of love lay the secret of John's suitability for his special part in the "testimony of our Lord."

A brief notice of our first introduction to the Apostle in the Gospel history may be interesting. It is in perfect harmony with all that followed. Emerging from the quietness and obscurity of his life as a fisherman, he seems to have been drawn down, with others, from the seclusion of his native Galilee, to

Judæa, where the voice of him who was crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," was already making itself so distinctly heard. Although John's name is not actually mentioned, it is generally assumed that it is he who is presented to us in the 1st chapter of John's Gospel as one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who left their own teacher, and followed the one of whom their teacher gave such a powerful testimony—"Behold the Lamb of God."

This scene, of itself, opens up to us what is immensely encouraging in the ways of God towards us. John, and Andrew his companion, had evidently not been content with just taking their place amongst the crowd who had, in a way, accepted the testimony of the Baptist, and had then settled down again quietly in the old paths. They were men of purpose—they were set upon blessing—and they kept up so close to the light which they had already received that when "The Light" Himself was in sight, they were prepared for the step onward which was to bring them into His blessed company.

We read with ever-increasing enjoyment the account of this meeting which furnished so powerful an impulse to the life of the man whose path and testimony we are contemplating. It doubtless brought vividly before

him, as it does to ourselves, the great fact which, if realised, would solve many a difficulty, and dispel many a cloud—that CHRIST is set as the centre towards whom everything that is for God, or of God, must be drawn. All that had ever occupied the minds of men—even in that which was of divine origin in Judaism—must now give place to the claims of a living, loving, Person, capable of engaging and satisfying the affections of those, who, like Rebekah, are willing to leave all, and set out, with purpose of heart, to reach Him.

This is all brought into prominence in the characteristic words and ways of the Lord on this occasion. He, seeing these two disciples drawing near to Him, in His own gracious way tests them by putting the question, “What seek ye?” It was to bring out from themselves, in their own words, the expression of the first kindlings of affection in their hearts towards Himself, and this is what we get in their reply—“Where dwellest THOU?” The object of their seeking would not be answered in anything corresponding to the word “*What*.” It was Himself, the Person, “God’s Lamb,” whom they recognised (no doubt dimly at first) as the One who alone could communicate to them that which their hearts were set upon. The

Lord's invitation to them, "Come and see," gave to them the opportunity of getting into the seclusion of His company, and enjoying for themselves what must have given a tone and colour to all their subsequent history. "They abode with Him that day." In the language of the Song of Solomon, we may say that they sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to their taste.

As far as John himself was concerned, we see the result of it coming out in the peculiar features of his testimony—an intimate acquaintance with what was treasured up in the heart and thoughts of Christ. Others might, and did, get grand revelations of what was to be displayed "both in this world and in that which is to come," but it was for John to tell of what was to be enjoyed in the inner sanctuary, in the scene

"Where all those deep affections,
Which fill the Father's heart,"

are known and appreciated. All this will come before us later on.

The incident narrated in this 1st chapter of the Gospel (as well as all that comes out in chapters ii. and iii.) evidently occurred previously to the commencement of our Lord's regular Galilean ministry, as presented mainly in the first three Gospels. (Compare John iii., 24, with Mark i., 14.) It would

appear that those who were the subjects of the Lord's gracious ministry in John i. returned, for a time, to their ordinary occupations, and that it was after the Lord had begun to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom that He met some of them again on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and gave them their definite call to follow Himself, in order that they might be able to testify of all that He had said and done from the very beginning. (See Matt. iv., 18, Mark i., 16, and Luke v.)

“A VESSEL MEET FOR THE MASTER’S USE.”

The impression of the Apostle John which has been formed in many minds, assisted by pictures and portraits evolved from the fancy of those who never had the least insight into his real character, is that there was about him a kind of effeminate tenderness, and a lack of all that forcefulness and spiritual energy which we naturally associate with the idea of an Apostle. His writings have often been quoted to justify or excuse the sentimental tolerance of evil, often miscalled “charity,” which is one of the characteristic features of the day in which we live.

It is a relief to turn away from all this, and to gather, from the *Scriptures*, what will enable us to form an estimate, as true in itself as it is helpful to us, of what it really was which made the Apostle such a suited vessel for the special work he was intended

for. To this end, we quote a few verses which will set before us, in an exceedingly attractive way, the shaping of the vessel so as to be fitted for the Master's use :

“ He ordained twelve James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James, and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.—*Mark iii.*, 14-17.

“ John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. . . . And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ? ”—*Luke ix.*, 49-54.

“ Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake.”—*John xiii.*, 23, 24.

It is evident that John, naturally, was a man of unbounded energy, and possessed what we call great “force of character.” His heart had been drawn to the Person of the Lord (doubtless on the occasion we were contemplating in a previous chapter) with an attractive power which nothing could hinder or shake. The same set purpose which had led him to identify himself so closely with John the Baptist now drew him to the One of whom John testified. It is a

beautiful exhibition of the effect of true ministry—such a presentation of Christ that He becomes henceforward the supreme and controlling object—displacing all that which had hitherto held sway.

When the Lord, in due course, brought John into the circle of "the twelve," He distinguished him and his brother by a name which was, no doubt, descriptive of their most familiar natural characteristic, and we see this trait coming out, in its unbroken force, in the second passage quoted. To be able to call down fire from heaven, after the manner of Elijah, would, no doubt, be impressive and awe-inspiring, but what about the Lord's mission of grace towards the world? He had to tell these two disciples that they knew not what spirit they were of.

In fact, all this energy of the natural man must be subdued if there is ever to be anything that God can use for Himself—and what can subdue it except being in accord with the death of Christ—the death of Christ rolling in, like a flood, upon all that is so unbroken, and so un-Christlike in ourselves? With this in view, it is very touching to contemplate the scene referred to in the third passage quoted. It was "the night in which He was betrayed." The little

company were now shut in with Jesus in the upper room. There were dark shadows falling upon them, and as to the blessed Lord Himself, it says of Him, "He was troubled in spirit." The forces of evil were already concentrating themselves. Within the circle the betrayer was in readiness; outside of it the haters of Christ were preparing themselves, under the power of darkness; and, above all, He Himself, in the perfection of grace and obedience, was about to go down into the dust of death, under the holy judgment of God against that which was so obnoxious to Himself.

It is touching to see where John was at such a moment as this. Was it still with him now as heretofore, desiring to call down fire from heaven on the haters of Christ? Was he still in all that energy of nature which had previously been so much in evidence? No, we find this "son of thunder" leaning on the bosom of Jesus, finding his retreat near the heart of Him upon whom the dark shadow of the cross was resting.

The devotedness of the Apostle to the Lord was undiminished, but he had learned much since the incident of Luke ix. He had been brought under the subduing power of the death of Christ, which, though (at that

moment) still future, was no less a reality to him; and now, at the moment when, in view of that death, everything was being tested, and brought out in its true colours, it is a melting sight to see this strong-willed man subjugated, and so distrustful of himself that the bosom of his Master was his only place of safety! He—the Beloved of the Father, the True and Faithful, the Light amidst the surrounding darkness, unchanged in the presence of utter breakdown even within the circle of His own disciples—was the only one in whom the disciple could confide.

If we trace out the indications which are given of the Apostle's character at a later period, we see that there is the same deep-rooted devotedness to the Lord, and, though divested of what was merely natural, there is the same intense jealousy as to anything which would involve a slight upon His blessed person. There is a love and tenderness towards the children of God which is unequalled, and a consideration even for the youngest of the family which is quite unique, but for the least intrusion into the sacred domain of "the truth," *i.e.*, the confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh," there is no palliation, no excuse. A few brief verses from the Epistles will make this clear, and it

is important for us to meditate upon them, in this day of laxity and indifference :—

“ Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-Christ that denieth the Father and the Son.”—1st *Epistle ii.*, 22.

“ And every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh is not of God ; and this is that spirit of anti-Christ whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.”—1st *Epistle iv.*, 3.

“ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine [*i.e.*, the doctrine of Christ] receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed. For he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”—2nd *Epistle 10*, 11.

These are utterances of a “son of thunder,” subjugated by the love of Christ, which come in upon us with all the vigour and freshness of a springtide breeze—the utterances of a disciple who had been in living contact with Him who was “the chiefest among ten thousand.” He had been so formed and shaped by it that he was able to detect and expose the beclouded speculations of minds which had never come under the pure light of “the truth.”

How we need, in this day, to be braced up afresh with the fervour and faithfulness which characterised this “disciple whom Jesus loved” ! Nothing but this will enable

us to hold the ground against the subtle and deadly efforts of Satan to undermine what is so wonderful in itself, and withal so vital.

" We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."—*John i.*, 14.

We who have been, through grace, brought under the controlling power of a Person so great, and, at the same time, so suited to bring the knowledge of God within our reach, need to be increasingly sensitive to the least intrusion of what is merely mental and fleshly into a sphere of such sacredness.

JOHN'S PART IN THE TESTIMONY.

To be occupied with what is merely historical does not, as a rule, contribute to our understanding of the ways of God, in a spiritual sense ; but, in connection with our present subject, we get great light as to the character of John's part in the testimony if we consider, for a moment, the historical features of the period during which his writings were given to the saints.

The last presentation of the Apostle to us, in the historical narrative, is on the occasion of the coming together of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem to confer over the Antioch question, Acts xv. Paul himself speaks of it in *Galatians ii.*, and while there is much about the whole narrative which suggests the creeping-in of what was below the distinctive character of Christianity, yet it is refreshing to read Paul's own account of how James, Cephas, and John gave him the "right hand of fellowship," and recognised him as the chosen vessel of God's grace to the Gentiles.

From this point onwards, there is nothing beyond the misty and contradictory records of tradition to guide us as to the circumstances and vicissitudes of John's history. Out of all that has been handed down, there are but a few things which seem to be fairly well established, and are generally accepted. We gather that he lived for some time in Ephesus, after leaving Jerusalem (probably after the death of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was committed to his care by the Lord Himself) that he survived all the rest of the Apostles, including Paul, and that the Gospel and Epistles and Book of Revelation were written towards the close of the 1st century, the Gospel being the first in order of date. Paul's departure occurred about the year 67.

During the period of about 30 years which elapsed between the closing-up of Paul's testimony and the bringing out of John's writings, a very marked change had come over all that which bore the name of Christ here. Paul had, in his address to the Ephesian elders (Acts xx.), given an indication of what was coming, and he himself lived to see some of the "grievous wolves" who had entered in, "not sparing the flock." He knew what it was for some or all of these very Ephesians, "all in Asia,"

to turn away from him, and to drift from the high level of the calling which had been so worthily set forth by the Apostle himself, to that level of things which has characterised the history of Christianity, even down to the present moment.

It needs only a very superficial study of the addresses to the seven churches in Asia to gain some impression of the extent to which false teaching and defective practice had eaten their way into that which was set up here to be the light-bearer amidst the darkness of Judaism and heathenism. These seven churches, or, at any rate, five out of the seven, were characterised by forms of evil or failure which made them, in a most striking way, a prophetic picture of the whole state of Christianity, from the beginning of its decline in Ephesus, to its final and inglorious rejection under the characters of Thyatira and Laodicea.

All these references to the period when John's distinctive teaching began to be presented make it clear that what may be called the ecclesiastical side of the work of the Apostles had broken down, and the saints of God found themselves in a position in which they were called upon to "overcome"—not so much the antagonism and evil of the world *outside*, as the indifference and evil,

both doctrinal and moral, *inside* the sphere where the light was shining. This state of things has continued throughout the whole subsequent history of Christianity, and has never been more distinctly manifested than at the present moment.

To some it may appear too extreme a view to take of Christianity that it has so signally failed in its testimony in the world. They ask : Does not the Gospel go forth more freely than ever ? Have not whole nations—England in particular—been affected and permeated by the principles of Christianity ? Are there not more Bibles sold, more heathen evangelised, more philanthropic institutions reared up, than ever before ? These and similar questions may, perhaps, be answered in the affirmative, and we can be, and are, thankful for every avenue that has ever been opened through which the “ true knowledge of God ” may be carried to those who are “ sitting in darkness.”

It does not, however, need a very deep acquaintance with the mind of God, as made known in Scripture, to see that the central purpose of the Church's existence here was that it might be descriptive of Christ, that it might show to the world practically what never could be known in any other way. Christ Himself was the expression of God

when He was down here, and men could see in Him that divine love which it was God's will and pleasure to make known ; but when He had been repudiated and disallowed by those whom He came to bless, then was brought to light the wonderful purpose of God--up to that time a hidden mystery, but now made manifest to the saints—that Christ should still be here, continued (as regards His moral features) in His body, the whole company of those here on earth who belong to Him.

It was to this end that the Spirit came and took up His dwelling-place here in the saints, and wonderful indeed would have been the result in testimony if the fruits of the Spirit, the lovely moral characteristics of Christ, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control" (Gal. v., 22), had been exhibited in power in the Christian company. No doubt it was so in the earliest days, and both Jew and Gentile were able to see for themselves, in actual result, what God had purposed and brought about for his own pleasure.

How far this sublime purpose of God has been practically lost sight of in what is known as "Christendom," *i.e.*, the visible organisation which carries the name of Christ, the reader himself is able to judge by

the simple facts of history, and by what he may see all around at the present moment. The failure began at such an early stage that the apostolic writers were able to set forth, from existing facts, what were the main characteristics of it, and it is in this way that we have so much in the Scriptures that is valuable for our guidance in the circumstances in which we find ourselves to-day.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to look into what the Spirit of God says to us as to our own individual position with reference to the failure. That is abundantly and clearly set forth in the writings of the Apostle who was, as we have seen, specially separated for the ministry of the glad tidings and of the assembly. What is, however, of immense interest to us is that, while the failure of the external system was developing itself in various ways, the Lord was preparing a vessel—already chosen—in the person of the Apostle John, for the task of placing on record those vital and abiding realities which depend for their maintenance, not upon man's responsibility, but upon the faithfulness of Him out of whose love and beneficence they had all sprung.

It is this which constitutes John's special part in the testimony, and hence we see that

his writings deal, not with anything ecclesiastical, or with that which related to the order or discipline of the house of God, but with that which is characteristically heavenly made available for us here on earth, and which the saint can, as it were, retire upon, and find unchanging and unfailing, when earthly props, one by one, give way.

What unbounded cheer must have been given to the saints, in John's own day—beset on all sides, as they were, by worldliness and anti-Christian error—to have these writings put into their hands ! The Apostles and others, through whom the truth had been originally communicated, had probably all left the scene, with the one exception of John himself. Great weakness and failure existed *within*, and great opposition *without*. Everything seemed outwardly to speak of the early extinction of that which had been once so bright, and so fragrant with what was of Christ. What could, naturally speaking, prevent its being wiped out of existence, according to the purpose and desire of the great enemy himself ?

All such fears must have been set at rest for the saints of that day, as well as for all those who have succeeded them, by these simple, and yet profound, utterances of the Apostle John, who had been preserved in

spiritual health and vigour, a fitted vessel for the Master's use. Who so suited for the purpose as he who had leaned on the bosom of that Master, who had appreciated and treasured up, and had been so greatly affected by, the gracious words which fell from that Master's lips? He was the one qualified to tell those secrets which were hidden from the unappreciative mass, and which the Lord intended to become the portion and delight of the true heart through succeeding generations until His return.

It was long ago pointed out that it was in this way, *i.e.*, in his *ministry*, that John was to fulfil the words spoken of him by the Lord in John xxi., "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" His *ministry*—whether concerning that which was to abide unchanging and unchangeable, or as to the judgment which was to fall upon the unfaithful church—was to carry the saints along until the second coming of Him who is the Faithful and True Witness.

Now it is not proposed in this little book to go through the writings of John in detail, or to trace each successive step in the history and teaching of the "Sent-One," as John records it. The writer would content himself with a reference to the main lines which

run through John's testimony, and which give it its special character.

Out of the great variety of subjects which present themselves before us, there appear to be SEVEN which occupy a position of special prominence, and which may be said to give character to all the rest. In meditating upon these, therefore, one may perhaps get a more complete view of the wonderful breadth and scope of John's testimony than in any other way. We will devote a brief chapter to each.

These SEVEN subjects are as follows :—

1. The Knowledge of Divine Persons.
2. The Father.
3. The Son.
4. The Holy Spirit.
5. Eternal Life.
6. The New Circle in Relation to its Centre.
7. The Establishment of the Kingdom, and the Eternal State.

We will take them up in this order.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE PERSONS.

The knowledge of divine Persons is so wonderful that one feels instinctively that but little can be said or written about it. We could not apprehend it at all but for the fact that, in Christianity, this is the very thing which God, in infinite grace, has set Himself to bring about. He has, therefore, encouraged us to draw near, and, as we were reminded in an earlier chapter, to "come and see" that which, naturally, we had no capacity whatever to take account of. It is this which forms the principal contrast between the privilege of the present moment, and all that had preceded it. Enoch, who "walked with God," or Abraham, the "friend of God," or Moses, "the man of God," or Daniel, "greatly beloved" of God, were all alike ignorant of that which even the little ones, the babes, in the Christian circle, are enabled to appreciate and delight in.

It need hardly be said that every New Testament writer is marked by a more or less full presentation of Divine Persons. "Christianity," without this, would have no reason for its existence ; in other words, it may be

said that Christianity consists of, or is characterised by, the revelation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and whatever aspect of the truth may be taken up by the different writers whom God has fitted for His purpose, it is inevitable that these Divine Persons should be in the foreground. It would be a work of the deepest interest to trace out in detail the place which they occupy in each of the books of the New Testament, but we must limit ourselves here to considering how they are presented through the Apostle whose writings are now before us.

Speaking generally, it may be said that, both in John's Gospel and his Epistles, the Divine Persons are contemplated as in their own proper sphere ; and, though regarded as distinct in their relations toward each other (we speak humbly and reverently) and toward us as the objects of divine love, yet they come before us as absolutely ONE in thought and purpose. It is only through a presentation of the distinctive features of these Divine Persons that we can have any clear knowledge of God at all, and it is an immense and unspeakable privilege to be so emancipated from the thralldom of our own condition of weakness and distance that we can, by the Spirit, sit down and rest in the very scene where these Divine Persons move

and live. We can anticipate, by the Spirit, that which we shall enjoy the "actuality" of, by and bye.

Perhaps two or three quotations will help more than anything to set before us this wonderful revelation of God, as John is used to communicate it. To give anything like an adequate presentation of it, one ought to quote the *whole* of John's writings, for it is difficult to make anything like a selection without spoiling the picture somewhere. However, the following verses may give some conception of the grandeur of the subject which is before us :

"No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."—*John i.*, 18.

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand."—*John iii.*, 35.

"For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." *John v.*, 20.

"Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall glorify me. . . . All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."—*John xvi.*, 13-15.

From the above quotations, and from the whole wonderful record of incidents, the gracious words of Christ Himself, the divinely-inspired comments of the Apostle upon all that he had seen and heard, as well

as what had come to him subsequently in the way of divine communications, we get, in our measure, a sense of the greatness of the revelation which God has been pleased to make of Himself to us, and the place which Christ occupies as the One through whom it has all come within the range of our appropriation and enjoyment.

In the next three chapters, as we proceed, humbly and reverently, to study the distinctive features of each of the divine Persons, may we get some fresh insight into the wonderful reality of the blessing which has come to us ! Although it is impossible for any finite creature to grasp the infinite, or to explain what the divine mind alone can understand, yet, in another aspect, it is clearly put within our reach (in the words of John himself) to know the Father, to know Him that is from the beginning (*i.e.*, Christ) and in the power of the anointing (*i.e.*, the Spirit), to know all things (1 John, ii., 13, 20). This heart-knowledge, this linking of our affections with Divine Persons, is the assured privilege of every believer, and it is for him to cultivate it, and to discern and refuse all that would hinder or grieve the Spirit in the gracious office which He has come to fulfil as the " Guide " and " Encourager " in all the truth.

THE FATHER.

It may be said, at the outset, that the first and simplest thought, and that which most directly appeals to us, in connection with the presentation of God as "Father," is that of *affection*. The very name of "Father" indicates that God would have His love known, and the Son, "who is in the bosom of the Father," the place of affection, is the One qualified to bring it down to us. Many and striking were the titles under which God had been pleased to speak to saints in other ages, but it was reserved for Christ to be the great unfolders of that which was expressed in the name of "Father"—infinite dignity, compassion, and love.

This was foreshadowed long before in the prophetic words of Psalm xxii. :

"I will declare Thy name unto my brethren ;"

and it found its answer in the words of Christ Himself in John xvii. :

"I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

These passages (with others which we will quote) help us to see that, in John's writings, the name of "Father" is connected generally

with one or other of *three* main thoughts, although there are, of course, many other aspects. It is either, 1st, that the name is employed whenever attention is to be directed to the place which the Son occupies in the divine affections and counsels :

“ The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.”—*John iii.*, 35.

“ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.”—*John x.*, 17.

“ All things that the Father hath are mine.”
—*John xvi.*, 15.

or, 2nd, that the Father is the divine spring, the fountain-head, of life, and love, and of all blessing :

“ For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.”—*John v.*, 26.

“ My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”—*John vi.*, 32.

“ We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”—1 *John iv.*, 14.

or, 3rd, that the name is associated with the activity of divine love in bringing into blessing those who have been given to Christ, as well as the present favour with which they are regarded :

“ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”—*John v.*, 17.

“ The Father seeketh such to worship Him.”—*John iv.*, 23.

"The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me."—*John xvi.*, 27.

"That the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me."—*John xvii.*, 23.

Many other passages might be quoted, but the above may be sufficient to help the reader a little in following out for himself the choice and beautiful lines of the Gospel on this subject.

Flowing from the presentation of the name of "Father," as it is given in connection with ourselves as the objects of divine affection, we have necessarily the thought of relationship, and this is brought out in John's writings in a peculiarly gracious way. The word which John employs to denote the relationship involves the birth-tie, with a corresponding moral resemblance. Two brief passages will illustrate it :

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name."—*John i.*, 12.

"If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God."—1 *John ii.*, 29, and *iii.*, 1.

This aspect of the relationship appears to be limited (as has been pointed out) to what

we are down here in a scene of rejection, not only morally after His nature, but needing and receiving the tender love of Him whose heart is, in such a special way, toward us in Christ. The other side of this truth—"sonship"—as presented more especially in Paul's Epistles, is connected with the purpose of God, and our association with Christ. This is taken up by John in one passage of great beauty, which will be referred to a little more particularly in a future chapter.

"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God."—*John xx.*, 17.

It was the first announcement to the disciples of the position which they were to occupy in relation to Christ risen and glorified. They were to be, and have been, known as His brethren—His Father known as their Father, of the same order as Himself.

"He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—*Heb. ii.*, 11.

Connected simply and naturally with what has gone before, we have the blessed thought of the "Father's house," which is peculiar to John, occurring only once in Scripture :

"In my Father's house are many mansions."—*John xiv.*, 2.

It may be doubted whether any verse in Scripture has brought comfort to more wearied hearts than this one. Its bearing has probably been misunderstood over and over again, and yet, in all ages of the church's history, and under all circumstances of life and death, joy or sorrow, suffering, persecution, oppression, or disappointment, the Spirit of God has used it to lift up the heart into a region where divine love reigns, and sorrow is unknown.

The words of Christ in this verse indicate that, as the result of His death and resurrection, a wholly new sphere of enjoyment is opened out for the believer, and that he has "a place" in the inner circle where these Divine Persons are (we say it reverently) at home. It is not a question of coming into the Kingdom, coming under the gracious rule of Christ through the acceptance of the Gospel, but the power to appreciate and enjoy, by the Spirit, what is characteristic of the scene where the Father finds His rest in the Son of His love.

"Where all those deep affections,
Which fill the Father's heart,
Can find their satisfaction,
Their joy to us impart."

It was this which was to bring such comfort to the hearts of the little company

whom the Lord was leaving behind to take His place in the scene of His rejection. They would be, in a bodily sense, still here upon the earth, but as to their affections, they would have "a place" in the scene to which Christ Himself was going. A simple illustration of the effect of it may be found in the experience of anyone who, like the writer many years ago, finds himself far away from his home—in a foreign land, and under circumstances which are uncongenial and distasteful. He has to work, and carry out his duties generally, in these unsuitable surroundings, and he does so, perhaps, faithfully and well. But where is his "place"? Where are his affections centred? Surely in the circle of his home in distant England, where his *relationships* are. His "place" there is kept for him in the affections of those to whom he is endeared, and his thoughts and hopes travel away from his uncongenial surroundings to where he is *loved*, to the home of affection. And more than this, how he delights to receive communications from his home, to get messages of affection which remind him that he is not forgotten, though absent, and that his return is looked for!

So it is with the believer who not only knows, but cultivates, the intimacy of the

Father's house. It sways his thoughts, controls his affections, gives him discernment of things here as they really are, and makes him divinely sensitive as to what is compatible, or otherwise, with the scene of holiness and love to which he belongs.

By and bye, the Lord Himself will come and introduce us actually, and not merely in spirit, into the circle where He is fully known and appreciated, preparatory to the public manifestation of Himself as the Centre and Fulfiller of all the Father's counsel.

THE SON.

The presentation of Christ in the writings of John is so striking that it is only with a conscious sense of our own inability, and of our need, in a very special way, of the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that we can approach it at all. Every reverent reader feels instinctively, although he may not be able to explain it, that here he is in the presence of that which is of a totally different order of things from all that he has met elsewhere. The secret of it lies in the fact that it is the *divine personality* of the lowly and humbled Christ, of Him who drew so near to us in our need, which the Apostle John sets forth with such simplicity and attractiveness. Who can contemplate, without being deeply subdued and moved, the presentation of a Divine Person dwelling among us, walking about among us, and always carrying about Him that which was characteristic of the place from whence He came? Hence it is not to be wondered at that the saints of all ages of the Church's history have clung with intense affection to these writings; for here, more than anywhere else, they see the One who is dearest to their hearts presented in all the shining lustre of the divine glory which

belongs to Him, and which gives character to all that He did and said.

Perhaps it would be interesting, first of all, to refer briefly to the difference between John's presentation of Christ, and that of some of the other writers in the New Testament. First, as to the Gospels, and we shall not go beyond their general character.

MATTHEW presents the Lord in His relation to Israel. His genealogy is therefore traced down from Abraham, through the kingly line of David and Solomon. His name was to be called Jesus, because He should save His people from their sins. The great point of the Evangelist is to set forth Christ as the One who was in Himself the Fulfiller of the Old Testament prophecies relating to Israel. In this way, He is presented (as another has said) as "a new standing ground for Israel," because He Himself takes the place of Israel. Where Israel utterly failed, Christ shines out in all the perfection of His obedience as the Righteous One, and it is in Him that the godly remnant of Israel will find their true relation with God in the time to come.

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory."—*Matt. xii.*, 20.

LUKE is on similar ground to Matthew, but with this great difference that it has its application to man generally. Hence the genealogy of Christ, as man, is traced right back to Adam himself. From beginning to end, He appears before us as the suited vessel of God's grace, which, of course, could not take account of Jew or Gentile, as such, and could not be bound by the limitations of any one nation, however favoured. The incidents and parables peculiar to this Gospel, such as the two debtors, the "good Samaritan," the prodigal son, the thief on the cross, and many others, illustrate Luke's special ministry of Christ.

With regard to MARK, Christ is set before us as God's Servant, anointed and ready-equipped for God's will here. Hence there is no genealogy at all, and no reference to any events preceding the anointing of the Lord for His ministry except the preparation of the way by John the Baptist, according to prophecy. It has been said that "Mark is the continuation of prophecy, only in the form of glad tidings," alluding to the 1st verse of the Gospel, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee." If read in

the light of this, the Gospel of Mark presents a singularly beautiful delineation of the Lord's pathway of service—a service which was maintained even after His return to glory, as the last verse of the Gospel reminds us.

Referring for a moment to the Apostle Paul—it would require many a volume to open out the fulness of his presentation of Christ ; but, to put it in the briefest possible compass, it may be said that, in general, Paul has a grand and unique view of Christ as the exalted and glorified Man, constituted Head over all things, the One in whom are gathered up all the threads of divine purpose, an who is going to give effect to, and establish everything for God's will, in the age to come. As has been said, "He will take up every thing in His own Person ; everything is to be headed up in Him, gathered up in one in Him, for God's eternal glory."

"Whatever the promises of God, in Him is the Yea, and in Him the Amen, unto the glory of God by us."—2 Cor. i., 20.

Now, in distinction from these various aspects of Christ, we find that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was taught to speak of His Master from the standpoint of His *divinity*. He is the Son, in the bosom of the

Father, and yet coming into humanity, in order to bring within our reach the knowledge of the One who, otherwise, must of necessity have been infinitely beyond us. John's Gospel is, therefore, as has been said, "the backbone of all the Gospels," and it is in seeing the personal glory of Christ that we learn how to give the proper value to all that He did, and to all that may be called his "official" or "acquired" glories. For example, if it is a joy to our hearts to think that Christ, as Son of Man, will reign until all enemies shall be put under His feet, what additional lustre it lends to the glory of His position to know that He is essentially the Son, in whom is life, the Word of God, the beloved of the Father, one with the Father in being and nature !

It is in this view that John's Gospel occupies a wholly unique position amongst the Scripture writings. From first to last, though conscious of the ineffable grace and lowliness of the Person in whose presence we find ourselves, there is the sense that He is divine, that He lives and moves in a sphere which is outside all the workings of man in his littleness and self-importance. As He Himself says, in chapter vi., He lived on account of the Father—deriving everything from Him—and not on account of the world,

though He was coming so intimately in contact with it.

The opening words of the Gospel really contain within themselves a summary of that which the Apostle opens up, with wonderful fulness of detail, in the subsequent chapters.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was the beginning with God.”

This serves as an introduction of the Person who was to bring the love of God within the knowledge and reach of those who were “dead in trespasses and sins, without hope and without God in the world.”

“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”—*John i.*, 14.

In this verse is embodied the crowning glory of Christianity—that God would not be satisfied with communicating, through messengers, what His thoughts were, as in Old Testament days, but He would approach men Himself, and would let them see what grace and truth were, not as mere abstract principles, but as expressed in a living, loving, Divine Person, dwelling in their midst. That is what is involved in the designation or title under which the Lord is introduced

to us, "The Word," *i e.*, the one who expresses or communicates the divine mind*. It has been beautifully said by another, "He only, after a personal sort, expressed God. The Father and the Holy Ghost remained in their own unseeable majesty. The Word had for His place to express God clearly, and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory." (J. N. D.)

In connection with this, it is striking to notice that, while bringing into such prominence the divine glory of Christ, there is no Gospel which gives a tenderer or more attractive view of His humanity, and the perfection with which He entered into the deep and sore needs of those whom He came to bless. The interview with John's disciples in chapter i. ; the scene at Sychar's well, in chapter iv. ; His unfolding of Himself as the Shepherd leading out the sheep from the fold into the knowledge of Himself and the Father, in chapters ix. and x. ; His dealings with the beloved family at Bethany, in chapters xi. and xii. ; His personal devotedness in washing His disciples' feet, and His giving John a resting-place on His bosom at supper, in chapter xiii. ; His tender solicitude for His mother, in chapter xix. ; and His touching and gracious meetings with

* See Note to 1 Cor. i. 5, in J. N. D.'s New Translation.

Mary Magdalene and His own disciples, after His resurrection, in chapters xx. and xxi. All these—given by John only—serve to bring out the perfection of the Lord's entrance into humanity. They illustrate that commingling of divine and human tenderness which no other writer expresses with such vividness and attractiveness.

As a few examples of the unique presentation of the divine personality of Christ in John's writings, we may just take the following in the order in which they are put before us in the Scripture. We look at the Gospel first :—

1.—As a continuation of the remarkable setting forth of Christ as the "Word" of God, to which we have already referred, the 1st chapter goes on to speak of Him in reference to creation : "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Further than this—"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men"; that is, to *men* (not to other intelligences) God, in the full revelation of Himself, was presented; and a few verses farther down, this blessed Person is spoken of as qualified to give to all who received Him authority to take the

place of confidence and rest as God's children, (verse 12).

2.—In chapter ii., He could speak of His body as the temple in which God was dwelling at that moment upon earth.

3.—In iv., He is the giver of living water.

4.—Chapter v. presents Him as the co-worker with the Father, and the One who quickened, or gave life, according to His will, even as the Father did.

5.—In vi., He is the "bread of God," the "bread of life," and "the living bread which came down from heaven," which, if a man ate, he should live for ever.

6.—In viii., He speaks of Himself as the *Son* abiding in God's house for ever, in contrast with a *servant*, whose position depended only upon the changing will of his master. The full freedom of the house, therefore, was the portion of those who were in relation with the Son.

7.—Chapter x. speaks of His oneness with the Father, in divine intimacy, as well as in purpose and in power.

8.—In chapter xi., He says of Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life," and He could bring back into life one who was in death and corruption.

9.—In xii., there is the full anticipation and divine knowledge of the circumstances

of His death, which, like the sowing of a grain of wheat, was to become the fruitful source of life and eternal blessing.

10.—In xiii., we read of Him as being in complete and divine communion with the Father as to His own departure from the world, knowing “that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father,” and that “the Father had given all things into His hand.” It is this which gives to the washing of His disciples’ feet such peculiar significance.

11.—In xiv.-xvi., the result of His going back to the Father was to be the sending down of another Divine Person, “the other Comforter,” the Holy Ghost, who was to abide here during the period of the Lord’s own absence.

12.—In xvii., He can speak of the glory which He had before the world was, and of His desire for those who had been given to Him by the Father that they might behold that glory, as a fitting compensation for their having shared with Him His place of rejection here on earth.

13.—In xviii., in the overwhelming sense of the divine presence in which they find themselves, His enemies are unable even to stand before Him.

14.—In xix., when all was finished on the

cross, He, in a power wholly divine, and superior to all the workings of man and Satan, "delivers up His spirit" to God.

15.—In xx., He "breathes" upon His disciples, and introduces them into association with Himself in resurrection life, a divine act analogous to that which, in Genesis, marks the beginning of man's natural life in the image of God, here upon earth.

In the EPISTLES of John, the same aspect (generally speaking) is presented. The Lord Jesus Christ was Himself the manifestation down here of that eternal life which was with the Father (1 John i., 1, 2), and the Apostle can say of Him, as He contemplates Him in the proper circle and sphere of life, "He is the true God and eternal life" (chapter v., 20). To this, however, is added (as we shall see later on in the chapter on "eternal life") what He is to us, mediatorially, as Man, so that we, too, may have eternal life—"Which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." (chapter ii., 8.) It is evident that we could have no part with Him in His divinity, but as the risen and glorified Man (and yet withal the Son of God) He can

associate us with Himself, so that it can be said, "He that hath the Son hath Life." It is analogous to Paul's setting forth of Christ as "the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit"—the glorified head of a new order.

Then again, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God," (1 John, iv., 15), and the beautiful salutations in the 2nd Epistle, "Grace shall be with you, mercy and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love" (verse 3), and again, "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ (*i.e.*, Jesus Christ come in flesh) he hath both the Father and the Son" (verse 9).

These verses carry on still further—though on the same lines—that unique setting-forth of Christ with which the beloved disciple was engaged in the beginning of His Gospel.

We close this chapter with a keen sense of our own imperfect grasp and appreciation of the greatness of the Person of Whom we have such a wonderful presentation in the Scriptures ; but, at the same time, with a thankful heart that such a Person has come within our reach, and has spoken to us, and has revealed to us the blessed secret of the Father's love.

THE COMFORTER.

In keeping with what was presented in an earlier chapter with regard to the Apostle John being the chosen vessel for the setting-forth of Divine Persons, we find that he alone of the New Testament writers speaks of the Spirit, not so much as to what He *does*, but as to who He *is*. Of course, in some of the *effects* of the Spirit's presence here, John and Paul, for example, touch one another closely ; but speaking generally, John is alone in presenting the Holy Spirit in His Divine Personality, one in nature, purpose, and affection, with the Father and the Son. A verse or two in the 16th chapter of the Gospel puts this in a compact and clear form.

“ Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth ; for He shall not speak from Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

“ All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.”—Verses 13-15.

The reader will notice that, in these beautiful verses, the prominent point is not so much

that which the Spirit would bring about in the saints, or the effect of His presence in forming them into one body, or His manifestations in the Assembly; but what is centrally before the mind is that He, the "Spirit of truth," was to come down here to glorify the Son, and to make known, in a living way, the things of the Father and the Son. Surely this is His greatest and most exalted office here—more wonderful even than His work in and for the saints, blessed as that is.

"It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."—*John xvi.*, 7.

In this verse we contemplate one Divine Person—the Son—who had been pleased to limit Himself by the body which had been prepared for Him, leaving this world and going back to the Father, and His place being taken here by another Divine Person, not limited by a bodily form, but free to care for God's interests in every saint the wide world over.

As an additional, and most blessed fact, the Holy Spirit would not be limited as to the period of His dwelling here, but the promise is, "He shall abide with you for ever" There would never be a moment

during the sojourn of the Church on the earth when the Holy Spirit would not be present to illuminate and encourage the hearts of those who were here for Christ, no matter how dark the outlook might be, or how great the breakdown. How abundantly this has been fulfilled will only become manifest in the day of Christ.

There are a few brief, though very important references to the Holy Spirit in the earlier part of the Gospel. For example :—

(a) His gracious operation in the heart of a man by which he “enters the kingdom,” and enjoys the rule of Christ (iii. 5).

(b) He was to be given as “living water,” a “well of water springing up to everlasting life” (iv. 14), *i.e.*, to be the source of energy within the believer which leads him up to occupation with Christ where He now is, and into the apprehension of the Father’s love ; in other words, to enjoy eternal life.

(c) The divine energy in the believer, not now as springing up, but flowing outwards as “rivers of living water” (vii. 38, 39), to refresh and cheer with a ministry of Christ those who are weary and footsore.

There are abundant materials for enquiry and enjoyment in these references with which it would be, in every way, profitable to occupy ourselves ; but perhaps a more detailed meditation may be reserved for that which comes before us in chapters xiv.-xvi. In these latter chapters we have a threefold testimony, in the Lord's own words, to the gracious effect of the Spirit's presence here, which must have been peculiarly grateful to those to whom the Lord was speaking, and is no less so to ourselves. The three parts of this testimony are deeply interesting, taken up each by itself, but it is only when looked at as a whole that we can get a view of their real fulness and attractiveness :—

First.—Chapter xiv., 15, 16, 26 : “ If ye love Me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ;

“ Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. . . .

“ But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

The point before the Lord's mind here is evidently the filling-up of His own place amongst the Company He had gathered,

after He Himself had left them, so that what He had communicated to them, during His brief sojourn in their midst, might be maintained in its freshness, in their hearts. Not a fragment was to be lost ; and this is beautifully suggestive of one aspect of the Spirit's work from that day to this. Whatever of CHRIST has been ministered to our souls, or in other words, whatever of Christ has ever been formed within us, is a divine work, and, therefore, imperishable. The Spirit, who first imparted it, will cherish it, and increase it, and preserve it until the day when all will be displayed for Christ's glory.

The little group which was, at that moment, gathered around the Lord was, no doubt, representative of that far larger company which, according to the divine thought, was to be the display of the character and features of Christ during the whole period of His absence. We get the germ and secret of it in the 13th chapter, where He says :—

“ A new commandment, I give unto you,
that ye love one another ; as I have loved you,
that ye also love one another.”

Earlier in the same chapter they were, as regards the washing of the feet (*i.e.*, Christ ministered for cleansing and refreshment) to do unto one another as He had done unto them. In them, as in those who should

follow after them, the characteristics of Christ Himself were to be exhibited—love, humility, esteeming others better than themselves, forbearance, gentleness, as well as holiness and devotedness. There was to be that which would be fragrant of Christ—a sweet savour to God, and a witness even to the world itself.

What need, then, of a Divine Person to *dwell* with them—not merely to visit them for a brief moment, but to *abide*; and to be *in* them, the spring and power of all that was new and according to Christ! This Divine Person would be, indeed, another Comforter, or Encourager, or Advocate (as the word is translated elsewhere) one fully qualified to undertake for those who had been cherished and cared for by the Lord Himself during the period of His sojourn amongst them. He would be able to instruct them, as it has been said, “from within the circle,” apart from the independent of all outside influences and in this way they would be able to discern the true meaning of what was of the world, and of “that spirit of anti-Christ,” which, even in the Apostle’s day was “already in the world.” As he says later on, in the Epistle, “Ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”

How abundantly has the value of this been proved, in these latter days, by all who have sought, in any measure, to be true to their calling as part of Christ's assembly here !

Second.—Chapter xv., 26 and 27 : “ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.

“ And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

Here the reference is clearly to the external witness of the company which the Lord was, even then, forming to be a vessel for the reception of the Spirit. The primary fulfilment of it was, no doubt, on the day of Pentecost, when the Apostles were all “ filled with the Holy Ghost,” and with great power gave their testimony to the mighty fact that the One who had been crucified was now made “ Lord and Christ ”—set forth as the One into whose hand everything was committed for God.

The very presence of the Holy Ghost upon the earth—the external evidences of which were so strikingly manifest—was the living proof that Christ had been glorified, and the small company in the upper room at Jerusalem—mean and feeble as they were—were privileged to be identified with Him in thus

bearing witness to the present glory of the One with whom they had been "from the beginning."

This feeble few had walked with the Lord in His lonely path here, they had seen His works, had heard the gracious words which fell from His lips. They had sat with Him at the table when His last and sweetest desires were made known, had witnessed the agony in the garden, and the wondrous and soul-subduing glory of the cross. They had heard His voice, and seen His form in resurrection, had been witnesses of His return to the Father, and now—while the memories of His last farewell were still lingering on their hearts—they were to stand forth, in the midst of a world as hostile as ever, and make known the greatness of the One whom the heavens had received with joy and acclamation.

Such a witness would be impossible and hopeless without the power and support of the Divine Person who had come down to take the place of the rejected Son of Man. But, at Pentecost, He was a present reality—"He filled all the house where they were sitting," and they themselves "were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The testimony went forth with a power and unction which nothing could resist.

In a certain sense, the whole Christian company, of which that early group was representative, has been the witness, in every age of its history, of a glorified Christ. The witness has been marred and obscured by what has attached itself to the company, which has been enveloped, so to speak, in a mist of traditions, and conformity to worldly principles ; but, notwithstanding all, the witness has been maintained, and it will be here until the Spirit Himself takes His departure with the vessel which He came to fill.

Third.—Chapter xvi., 7, 8, 13, 15 : “ If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.

“ And when He is come, He shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. . . .

“ Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth ; for He shall not speak from Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak ; and He will show you things to come.

“ He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

“ All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

These beautiful words, though addressed, and primarily referring, to the group who were around the Lord at that moment, seem

to extend very especially, in their application over the whole period during which the Christian company were to be left in the world, and it is deeply interesting to trace how they have been fulfilled in the history of the saints, even in the darkest moments of their testimony here. The central thought in them is—how this feeble company was to be qualified to meet the subtle spiritual opposition, as well as the more open antagonism, of the world-system with which they would be in contact during His absence, and at the same time, how they were to be maintained in living touch with these Divine Persons.

The Lord, in the earlier part of the chapter, puts the position clearly before them, so that there should be no misapprehension as to the difficulties to be encountered :

“ These things I have spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

“ They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”

In view of all this, the Spirit, the “ other Comforter,” would, for the guidance and instruction of this feeble company, throw light upon, or expose, *the true character of

* This is the true bearing of the word translated “ reprove.” Compare John iii., 20., Eph. v., 13, and elsewhere.

the world-system. Its crowning sin (verse 9) consisted of the rejection of Jesus Christ come in flesh ; it was really under judgment (verse 11), because the prince of it, from whom it derived its motives and springs, had been judged and fully exposed in his hatred of God and Christ. So that there could be no longer any question of the utter alienation of the system, as such, from all that was of God.

As to "righteousness" (verse 10) the fact that the only "Righteous One" was going back to the Father would be the perpetual proof to the Christian company that everything for them, in the way of righteousness, would be in another scene, and that in this world righteousness had no place since Christ had gone out of it.

If the professing Christian company, as a whole, has not continued in the light of the Spirit's teaching and illumination as to the world-system, it is, at any rate, open to every individual Christian to avail himself of it, and that is what God is working to bring about in the day in which we live. He is awakening the saints afresh to see what they have in the Spirit for their own joy and blessing, as well as for their direction and guidance amid the special difficulties of the last and perilous times.

Now, while there is, as we have been seeing, the Spirit's light as to the world-system, so that the saints may not be deceived or caught up with any of its subtleties, there is, on the other hand, the opening out by the Spirit of another system of things of which Christ is the Administrator, for the glory of the Father "He shall glorify me. . . . All things that the Father hath are mine," &c.

There is a remarkable analogy between this and what was said of Isaac by Abraham's servant when he went to the land of his master's kindred to seek a bride for his master's son. His words are almost identical with those we are now looking at. "Unto him hath he given all that he hath" (Gen. xxiv., 36). Isaac was the "only" son of Abraham according to the divine order; he had been in the place of death (Gen. xxii.), and had been received back in resurrection (figuratively) by his father. It was for him that a suited bride was to be found, and she was brought to Isaac adorned with the gifts—the silver and gold and raiment—which had been bestowed upon her out of the treasures of Abraham's house. Everything had come from there.

It is after a similar fashion that the Spirit is here presented to us as the One who was to bring the light of Christ into the hearts of

those destined to form His bride. And He does not (as these verses tell us) speak from Himself, but whatsoever He hears, that He speaks. In other words, He has taken the place of a servant, in perfect and divine unison of thought and purpose with the Father and the Son, to minister Christ according to the needs and circumstances of those whom He has come to enlighten. This is after the pattern of the Lord Himself, who, in His earthly ministry, spake not His own words, but those He received from the Father.

It is thus that the Spirit is here to adorn us with that which is of Christ. He is the One to enlighten our hearts as to the present and coming glory of the true Isaac—the Risen Christ. He guides, or forms, us in the truth—whatever is known of God in Christ ; and when the proper moment comes, He will (as we learn from other Scriptures), undoubtedly accompany the bride to the waiting Bridegroom in the Father's house.

Such, then, are the main lines of John's teaching as to the coming and presence of the Spirit as He is here to-day, and as He

will be here “until the day break, and the shadows flee away.” May both writer and reader be kept in all the freshness and power of a Spirit not only ungrieved and unhindered, but, as it were, welcomed, and encouraged to go on with His blessed work within us. It reminds us of the song of Israel just on the borders of Canaan, when they saw the living water springing up for their refreshment and comfort—“Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it !” May this be our own heart’s desire !

ETERNAL LIFE.

There are two passages in John's Gospel and Epistle respectively, which, when put together, throw great light upon this wonderful subject, as the Apostle John was instructed to present it :

“ This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”—*John xvii.*, 3.

“ If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye shall also continue in the Son, and in the Father.

“ And this is the promise that He hath promised us, eternal life.”—*1 John ii.*, 24.

These verses set before us that (in full accord with what we have already seen) John's testimony as to eternal life is inseparably connected with his unfolding of Divine Persons. More than this, we gather from them, and other passages in relation to them, that John presents to us, more clearly and characteristically than any other writer, how, and in what form, eternal life may be known by the saints *now*—during this period of Christ's absence from the scene.

Now a brief reference to the subject of eternal life, in the order of its presentation elsewhere in Scripture, will help to throw into prominence what we find in John's writings.

In the Old Testament, the subject is presented in connection with the restoration of Israel; and from the other Gospels, and some references even in John's own writings (Chapter v., 39, vi., 68, &c.), it is evident that amongst the Jews, there was a kind of general sense that eternal life was to be the characteristic mark of the blessing which was to be theirs in the world to come. Little is said as to what they thought of it, but it was evidently in striking contrast—even in their minds—with a life which they had proved to be subject to failure, breakdown, and death.

David and Hezekiah both speak of "the land of the living" as an order of things where deliverance would be found from afflictions and death, and David also elsewhere, as well as Daniel, look upon "life for evermore," or "everlasting life," as the crowning blessing of God's intervention on behalf of Israel.

These Old Testament saints, and the godly souls who were in contact with the Lord during His life here (as in the references above quoted) had, of course, no apprehension

of eternal life as having to do, at any period, with Divine Persons in *heaven*. The promise was distinctly connected with blessing upon the *earth*. This is illustrated by the words of Peter to the Jews at Jerusalem—even after the Lord's resurrection and ascension (Acts iii.) when he was divinely authorised to announce that, on their repentance, the times of refreshing should come, and He whom the heavens had received, "until the times of restitution of all things," would return and inaugurate the era of blessing and unity which every godly Jew from Abraham onwards, expected and longed for. The blessing which was "commanded upon Zion, even life for evermore," (Ps. cxxxiii., 3) would find its accomplishment.

The final refusal of Israel to receive the testimony of Christ, as exhibited particularly in the rejection and death of Stephen, led, as the reader is aware, to the calling out of the Apostle Paul. He was separated and equipped with a special view to the unfolding of the true heavenly character of the Church as the body of Christ, as well as of the glory of Christ Himself as the Head of an entirely new system of things having this as its final issue, "that God may be all, in all" (1 Cor., xv., 28).

It is with this ultimate consummation of the great and gracious purposes of God that Paul's references to eternal life are generally connected. A brief quotation from the words of another will give clearness to this : " Paul is always leading on to the full result in glory ; he looks at the saint as associated with a glorified Christ according to the eternal purpose of God, who has predestinated us ' to be conformed to the image of His Son ' (Christ in glory) ' that He might be the first-born among many brethren.' Hence, speaking generally, we find that in Paul's writings eternal life is referred to the future, the ' end ' is eternal life."*

Paul, nevertheless, leaves abundant room, in his references to eternal life, for a *present* apprehension and enjoyment of it, in the power of the Spirit. As illustrations of this, the reader may be referred to Romans ii., 7, vi., 22 and 23, Titus i., 2, &c.

The only other New Testament writer who introduces the subject, besides those already referred to, is Jude, by whom eternal life is, as with Paul, referred to the future, with a possible present application—" Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jude 21).

*F. E. Raven.

Now, coming back to the writings of the beloved disciple, what we find is that, for us, eternal life is characterised by a living acquaintance with Divine Persons, and with the abode of divine love in which they dwell. This, as we shall see, is brought within the reach of the believer according to the gracious will and purpose of God for him, and is practically enjoyed down here within the Christian circle, of which it has been said, "Christ finds His home here on earth—amongst His own, amongst those who have His Spirit, and who have been given Him of the Father, in order that He might give to them eternal life."

It may be mentioned, in passing, that it is in view of the believer's enjoyment of eternal life that all the preparatory work of the Gospel has been wrought in him. "Forgiveness of sins," and "justification," are, in this way, a means to an end. This seems simple enough, and self-evident, but, owing to centuries of defective teaching as to the true nature of things, "eternal life" has come to mean—to many Christians—little more than what is involved in forgiveness itself.

Should any such be readers of this book, it would help them if they were to bear in mind that John's teaching is based upon the

assumption that forgiveness of sins is known and enjoyed by those to whom he is writing, and that the ground has been cleared, to that extent, in the spiritual history of those he is addressing. His only reference to the forgiveness of sins (within the writer's recollection) is the following :

“ I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.”—1 *John ii.*, 12.

It is on this ground that he is free to speak to them, and to lead them into the true appreciation of the LIFE, with its conditions and relationships, which God had in His mind for man, and which was manifested in Christ, as Man here, to the Apostles and others whose eyes were opened to see it.

How wonderful, then, that there is a life, “with the Father,” set forth and displayed and lived by Christ when He was here on earth, altogether beyond all the influences which have ever come into existence here ! This life is that which we are now privileged to enjoy, and enter into, as we see it essentially in Christ, and we are made capable of living and moving in its conditions and relationships here upon the earth. The Spirit has been given to this end.

THE GOSPEL of John, as has often been said, speaks of the eternal life generally from the point of view of its being the gift of God's love, and of what it is as set forth before us in Christ, the Sent One ; while the EPISTLE is occupied more with its features, or the conditions under which it is lived down here. These features are presented in such a way that they constitute for the saint a most valuable test, or touchstone, by which he may be enabled to know, not only that he himself has eternal life, or is in the benefit or good of it, but that whatever is not of this life, all that is pretentious and counterfeit, may be detected. This was peculiarly needful in the Apostle's own time, when heresies, gnostic and otherwise, were rife, and when the Person of the Christ was the object of attack, and "the truth" was in danger of being completely obscured by the mists of speculation and human reasoning. And it is equally valuable to-day, when unreality, and spiritual wickedness of every kind, lift up their heads and flourish on all sides.

To these remarks on the general scope of John's teaching as to eternal life we would add a very brief sketch of the subject, as it is taken up in his Gospel and Epistle

respectively, giving, in the order in which John speaks of them, the details of this highly interesting and important subject.

“ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—*John iii.*, 16.

This verse expresses the purpose of God’s love from eternity, made effectual by the “lifting up” of the Son of Man, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. (See verse 15).

“ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”—*John iv.*, 14.

Here we get the *power* by which we are made capable of entering livingly into the joy of eternal life, in contrast with all we have ever known here on the earth. It really points to the gift of the Spirit, equivalent to the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” into which the disciples were really brought on the resurrection day, although the Spirit

Himself, personally, had not yet come.
(John xx.).

“ He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. . . .

“ Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which testify of me, and ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.”—*John v.*, 24 and 39.

This was the Divine declaration, to those who were denying and despising the testimony of the Sent One who was in their midst, that eternal life, such as even they themselves apprehended as being spoken of in the Scriptures, was essentially in the Son, and only where there was the link of faith with *Him* could there be said to be any appreciation of God's gift of eternal life.

“ And this is the will of Him that sent me that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life.
. . . .

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. . . .

“ I am the living bread which came down from heaven ; if any man eat [*i.e.*, shall have eaten] of this bread, he shall live for ever. . . .

“ Whoso eateth [*i.e.*, he that eats] my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.”—*John vi.*, 40, 47, 51, 54.

These verses indicate the Divine means by which eternal life is entered upon and sustained experimentally, viz., the appropriation of, or feeding upon, Christ, who has placed Himself within our reach for this purpose. If we accept, or are in fellowship with, His death—“eating His flesh, and drinking His blood”—as the closing-up of everything on our side, and the recognition that everything for life or satisfaction is found in Him, who has ascended up where He was before (see verse 62), then we can indeed taste a little of the abounding joy of that which is beyond the touch of death, and that of which mere nature can never lay hold.

“Thy flesh is meat, Thy blood, blest Saviour,
 shed
 Is drink indeed ;
 On Thee, the true, the heavenly, living bread,
 Our souls would feed.
 And live with Thee in life's eternal home,
 Where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death, can
 come.”

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly. . . .

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life."—*John x.*, 10, 27.

This is the first real indication, in the Gospel, of the company, which was even then being gathered, of those who, themselves possessing the life, were to form the circle where the life was to be enjoyed in its associations and conditions down here upon the earth. For it need hardly be said that eternal life is not intended to be enjoyed in isolation, any more than any other life. So that, though it is itself essentially in Christ, it is intended to be enjoyed in the atmosphere, the affections, the relationships of that circle where (as another Apostle says) "Christ is everything, and in all." (*Col. iii.*, 11). We shall see this a little lower down when we come to John's Epistle.

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it for life eternal"

"I know that His [*i.e.*, the Father's] commandment is life everlasting."—*John xii.*, 25, 50.

These verses contain a most weighty expression of the Lord's own thoughts as to which life is really worth loving and

cultivating—not the “life in this world,” with its shams and unrealities, and with the marks upon it of corruption and death, but the life about which THE FATHER has given a “commandment.” It is the outcome of *His* purpose, as we have before seen ; and, therefore, it is infinitely worthy of being followed after, and taken hold of, in the energy of an unfettered and ungrieved Spirit.

“ Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee.

“ As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.

“ And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”—*John xvii.*, 1-3.

We are here brought back to the point from which we started, and these words of Christ form, as it were, the very centre and focus of all the Divine thoughts on this great subject we are contemplating. We are admitted, in effect, into the inner sanctuary, fragrant with the incense of the perfections of Christ, and we get, from the lips of the Sent One Himself, words which captivate and engage our hearts, and which make

clear, with the illumination of divine light what we are so slow to grasp and appreciate.

He, as it were, claims from the Father the only fitting response in glory to all His pathway of obedience and humiliation here, and with what object? It is that He, the Son, might, as a glorified Man, give effect to the Father's will in leading those who had been given to Him into the supreme blessing of the eternal life; that they might become acquainted, livingly, with these glorious Persons, and be made capable, by the Spirit, of having part in the circle down here where these Divine Persons can act according to that perfection of love and holiness which is their very nature.

Now this experimental side of things comes out more strikingly in John's Epistle, as we have already seen; and, with very brief references to a few of the verses which particularly set it forth, this chapter (already too long) will close.

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."—1 *John* i., 2.

It was fitting that John should, first of all,

present the life as it had been seen in the person of the Son of God Himself down here. The Apostles, no doubt, saw what was beyond the ken of the world. Even they seemed to be dull enough when they were actually walking with the Lord here, but when the Pentecostal blessing of the Spirit came upon them, then, at any rate, they could recall the transcendent sweetness of the life which, though lived here upon earth, was not *of the earth*, but was "with the Father." Above and beyond all that which the world could take account of, there was a life which was characterised by holiness and love. In that life there was nothing which was common to the ordinary natural life of man, nor was there anything in it which death could touch.

"And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life."—1 John ii., 25.

What was so transcendent in Christ is the portion—the promised portion (compare Titus i., 2) of those who abide in, or continue in, or who have come under the influence of, these glorious Persons. It is significant that this, and the beautiful verses in the context, should appear in the section of the chapter

relating to the "little children," the youngest, the *παιδία*, of the family, so that we are entitled to say that there are none of us within the circle of fellowship of whom it could be said that we are incapable of appreciating what eternal life means and involves. The point is, do we set our faces, as it were, *towards it*, with distinct purpose, reaching out to it, so that we may *live it*, refusing what will hinder our growth in it?

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."—1 *John iii.*, 14 and 15.

These verses are found in a section of the Epistle (Chapters iii. and iv.), which is occupied with setting before us the characteristics, and proper surroundings, of the circle where eternal life may be enjoyed here upon the earth. This circle consists of those who, as we have just seen in Chapter ii., 24 and 25, continue in the Father and the Son, who are brought into acquaintance and intimacy with Divine Persons. In other words, it is the Christian circle, viewed as in its normal

features, made up of those who have been given to the Son by the Father. If all those actually found in this circle do not take up the privileges which are theirs, that does not alter the divine thought about them ; and on the other hand, it need not diminish the joy of those who have, individually, in any measure, been enabled to taste experimentally what there is to be found in this "wealthy place."

To "abide in Christ" (iii. 6), and to "love the brethren" (iii. 14), and to know God, and to live in the light of His love (iv., 7, 8), are realities which are true *only* of those who have eternal life, and such form only one company here, however much they may seem to differ in their apprehension, or however much they may appear to be separated externally.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. . .

"He is the true God, and eternal life."—
1 *John* v., 11-13, 20.

The chapter in which these verses are found supplies the one link, so to speak, still

needed to connect with CHRIST GLORIFIED that which had already come out with regard to the eternal life. It was not only that which was manifested in Christ *upon the earth*, as the Apostles saw it in Him (see chapter i., 1), but here we have the witness of the Spirit that the One in whom eternal life was thus set forth had now taken His place as Man in glory with the Father.

However much, therefore, we may think we are able to enjoy the conditions and relationships of eternal life in the circle where it is known here, we have to bear in mind that "this life is in His Son," *i.e.*, in Him who, though once in death, is now exalted and glorified, and out of death for ever. Whatever might be regarded as life, if it is apart from Him, is unreal and pretentious, and will come to nothing.

In the Divine wisdom, it seemed necessary that those who had never seen Christ on earth should have some further witness than the Apostles could give, and in this chapter we have the witness of the Spirit Himself, who would not have been here **at** all if Christ had not ascended up into heaven. His very presence here was the proof of the exaltation of Christ.

In these verses, therefore, and in the chapter generally, there is a fitting and final

answer to all mystical thoughts and questionings, and the full establishment of the soul, once for all, in the blessed fact that

“ HE IS THE TRUE GOD
AND ETERNAL LIFE.”

In view of all this, may we take to heart the admonition of the Apostle which immediately follows these momentous words :—

“ Little children, keep yourselves from idols ! ”

THE NEW CIRCLE IN RELATION TO ITS CENTRE.

In keeping with all we have hitherto had before us as to the general characteristics of John's teaching, we shall find that the truth he presents to us on the subject of the Christian company, or circle, is not connected with that which is public or ecclesiastical, but is limited strictly to that which is true of the individuals of which the company is composed, according to the Divine thought. It is, therefore, unaffected by the failure or breakdown of what is known as "Christendom."

All this is exceedingly blessed, for, on the one hand, it shows to us that God has been, and is, going on with His own work for His own pleasure, unhindered by what the "Church" has become externally. On the other hand, the saint himself can, in every age until the Lord comes, appropriate, by the Spirit, what is prepared for him according to God's mind, although everything that is merely ecclesiastical may, like worthless salt, have lost its savour, and be only fit to be cast out.

The Apostle John, in this way, stands practically apart from the other apostolic writers, for they were all more or less occupied with what was external, in one aspect or another. The principal, or perhaps the only point of contact between John's writings, and that which is *public* in Christianity, is his striking history of the decline and fall of the ecclesiastical system in the Book of Revelation. May it not be said that this lends additional force and value to all that has come to us through the Apostle? In other words, the servant who was instructed to pourtray the ruin of Christendom is the one who was also specially fitted to speak of that which is vital and abiding—that which was never committed to man's responsibility, and which man's failure cannot spoil.

Without going into very much detail, we may just notice how the subject is developed in the Gospel and Epistle, and what a very large place it occupies in the Apostle's testimony. As in previous chapters, we will give a brief but consecutive view of the subject in the Apostle's own words :—

i.—“ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”—*John vi.*, 37.

" My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."—*John x.*, 29.

" As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him

" Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me."—*John xvii.*, 2, 24.

These gracious words, from the lips of the blessed Lord Himself, tell their own tale, and comment would be out of place. We come so painfully short in our grasp of the love of God, and of the good pleasure of His will, that but few of us can take in the immense privilege of being part of the company who constitute the Father's gift to the Son. The truth of it is embodied in a verse often sung, but, perhaps, not very often appreciated :—

" Thou gav'st us, in eternal love,
To Him, to bring us home to Thee,
Suited to Thine own thought above,
As sons like Him, with Him to be
In Thine own house."—&c.

(ii.)—" As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."—*John vi.*, 57.

" A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved

you, that ye also love one another."—*John xiii.*, 34.

"Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."—*John xiv.*, 19, 20.

Those given to Christ (as in the previous paragraph) feed upon and appropriate Him, and being in accord, or in fellowship with, His death, are brought into the present reality of His life, by the Spirit. As it has been said, we live, not because we derive anything from the world-system, but because we derive from *Him*, as He lived by, or because of, the Father. Living in the life of Christ, we are in moral likeness to Him, and have the capacity to come out here in His character. If the conditions have not been taken up, is it any wonder that the result has been so ineffective?

(iii.)—"He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

"But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him were to receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."—*John vii.*, 38, 39.

This is the first intimation of what was going to mark the collective testimony of those who were given to Christ. It was not

intended that there should be anything which would assume ecclesiastical pretensions, as in the earthly order of things then about to pass away ; but from the “inward parts” of those in touch with Christ that which had already been put within was to issue forth in the power of the Spirit, in a refreshing and gladdening ministry of Christ, in this “dry and thirsty land where no water is.” There is great need of it on every hand. How many of us are so drawing from Christ ourselves that we can be the channel of blessing to others ?

(iv.)—“ I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father,
.”

“ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life.”—*John x.*, 14, 15, 27.

No words could convey a more beautiful idea of the closeness of the intimacy between those who are given to Christ—His flock—and the Shepherd Himself. There is, first of all, AFFECTION, and then KNOWLEDGE flowing and resulting from it. He has put Himself within our reach, as we have already seen, not only that we might have life in Him, but that we might be made capable of

knowing Him in all the perfection of His character, and of entering into His mind, and of being swayed and controlled by the mighty power of His love.

The writer recalls a remark made by a servant of the Lord that there is something, so to speak, *cognate* between Christ and the sheep, as there is between the Father and the Son, and it is in this way that the intimacy is possible. To put it in other words, we are "all of one" with Him; we derive everything in life and nature from Himself—even as the full ear of corn is "all of one" with the grain which was put into the ground and died.

(v.)—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."—*John xii.*, 24.

This verse gives, in the Lord's own words, the full explanation and unfolding of what was just touched upon in the previous paragraph. It contains within itself the great secret which is made known to those given to Christ—that *death* is the way to life. And we notice, also, that there is nothing sparing or limited with God, but out of the death of Christ springs "*much fruit*"—of the same order as the seed that was sown.

It may be asked how we are to get the good of this experimentally, and not as mere doctrine or "truth" received in the mind. The answer is contained in the verses which immediately follow—that it is just so far as we accept His death as the end of everything which would give us a status in this world, to that extent, and that only, do we enjoy practically the life that is outside of it. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

(vi.)—"Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."—*John xx.*, 17.

This gracious message of Christ, sent to His disciples on the day of His resurrection, lays down the true basis of our association with Himself. It is established in virtue of His death, as we saw in the previous paragraph, but it could only be made good in a life and condition which is beyond the reach of death. It is this which constitutes the immense value of the resurrection of Christ—that therein He can take His true place as "Head over all things," according to the eternal counsels of God, and at the same time surround Himself with those of whom

it is said, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

vii.—"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."—*John xv.*, 4.

"And now, little children, abide in Him."
—1 *John ii.*, 28.

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not."
—1 *John iii.*, 6.

Of these verses, it may be said that a meditation on the features of those who form the company given to Christ would hardly be complete without a reference to the One to whom the gift was made. It has often been said, and we do well to take heed to it, that it is possible to be so occupied with the circle as to lose sight, more or less, of the Centre of it. Like a flock without a shepherd, or a kingdom without a king, or the solar system without the sun, so would the Christian circle be without its Centre. It is from *Him* we derive all direction, all warmth, all light.

We have already endeavoured to give some little view of the glories of the Person of Christ, as the Apostle John was led to set

them forth, and it only remains for us here to draw attention to what these verses so plainly bring before us, that there can be no fruitfulness, no enjoyment of life, no practical holiness, apart from keeping under His influence and controlling power. It involves, no doubt, a refusal of much that is gratifying to oneself, and to one's self-importance. To be "meek and lowly" in this world, claiming no status, either religious or otherwise, is, of course, unacceptable to the flesh, and repugnant to the natural taste of man ; but what intense rest of heart it is when, in any measure, we can let things go, and accept, once and for all, the undivided sway of Him who is so worthy of our obedience and love !

To those of us who have known anything of what it is to keep near Him—to abide in Him—to accept His rule over us—it is an infinite rest of heart to know that the control is in the hands of One so great, and withal so tender and gracious.

We may conclude this chapter with a brief reference to the fact that it is only in the Christian circle, where the supreme influence of Christ is recognised, and where His love is known, that life, and deliverance

from the surrounding evil, can be practically enjoyed. We fully admit that, in one sense, everything must be sought for, and found, in Christ Himself, but it is evident that the atmosphere and influences of the Christian circle must have an immense effect upon the growth and prosperity of those who have part in it. Hence the admonitions that we should wash one another's feet (John xiii.), that we should love one another, that we should lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John iii.), and these admonitions are amplified, and pressed with great detail.

The general thought underlying all is that, in the world, we are surrounded by that which is essentially hostile, and that it is only in the light and warmth of that circle which is pervaded by Divine love, and swayed by the gracious influence of Him who is the centre of it, that the graces of Christ can be developed and encouraged. In that circle, as before remarked, "HE is everything, and in all."

If we took this to heart, what tenderness, what forbearance, what interest in one another's spiritual welfare, would be engendered, and how we should avoid all that high-mindedness, and self-complacency, and pride, which, like an east wind, puts a blight upon all progress and growth !

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM, AND THE ETERNAL STATE.

We may venture to refer again here to that which came before us in an earlier chapter, viz., the circumstances under which the Apostle John was first marked off as the vessel for the unfolding of the truth as to the closing up of God's ways with the world, and the introduction of Christ into His inheritance.

In the last scene recorded in John's Gospel (chapter xxi.) the Lord speaks to Peter concerning John in these words, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" It is afterwards mentioned that this saying was misinterpreted by the brethren in John's own day, as it has frequently been since then. The true explanation seems to be (as was pointed out by a servant of the Lord many years ago) that it was in his *ministry* that John was, in a certain sense, to continue on until the Lord's appearing. We accordingly find that, while the other Apostles could speak of the Lord's

appearing only as an event to be looked for at some future moment, John enables us, through the light which has come to us through him, to be eye-witnesses, as it were, of the thrilling circumstances which precede, accompany, and follow the manifestation of the One to whom all judgment has been committed.

The germ of the Book of Revelation is, in reality, found in the 5th chapter of John's Gospel, in which the position of Christ as the Executor of God's judgment, and the One who is to deal finally with the question of good and evil, are strikingly set forth, as well as the manifestation of anti-Christ.

"For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself ;

"And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

"Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice,

"And shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment. . . .

"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not ; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."—*John v.*, 26-29 and 43.

John, moreover, as we have seen, is occupied, in his writings, with what is *abiding*—

that which will stand the test, and continue on unalterable amidst the wreck and judgment of everything that man has had placed in his hands. It is only fitting, therefore, that John himself should be the one instructed to tell out God's thoughts about the final issues of things, and to depict the closing scenes in the history of man in his pride, and the opening out of the kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It would not be within the possibilities of this little book to go into anything like detail in speaking of this momentous subject. We must be content with simply opening out something of the *moral* force of the events depicted, and discovering how we ourselves should be affected by what is presented to us.

It may just be noticed that there is a striking moral suitability even in the circumstances under which the visions in the Book of Revelation were seen and recorded. The Apostle had been, for the sake of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, sent to the desolate and rock-bound Isle of Patmos. As to when, or why, or by whom, he had been carried thither, Scripture is silent ; but behind it all there must have been a Divine purpose working towards a very distinct end. We can see how essential

it was for the Apostle to be withdrawn from all touch with man's side of things, and to be absolutely alone with God, if he were to become, as he did, the depository of such stupendous revelations, and be made capable, as he was, of recording scenes which, for solemnity, and soul-subduing power, are only out-distanced by Calvary itself.

Now there is a simple and brief presentation of the main lines of the Book of Revelation in the 1st chapter of it, which we cannot do better than to follow, just so far as their moral bearing is concerned :—

“ Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [or ‘ after these things,’ *μετὰ ταῦτα*].”—*Rev.*, *i.*, 19.

1.—“ The things which thou hast seen.”

This seems undoubtedly to refer to the vision, recorded in chapter *i.*, of the Lord Himself, holding the seven stars in His right hand, and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, the seven stars being (as is explained in the chapter itself) the angels of the seven churches, *i.e.*, those who were looked upon as, in some sense, locally

representatives of the assemblies whose names are mentioned, and who were set to give light, which they had themselves derived from Christ, to the saints with whom they were in touch ; while the seven golden candlesticks were the seven churches or assemblies. These latter were, no doubt, representative of the whole Church on earth.

The figure of the candlesticks indicates very simply that these assemblies, as representative of the whole, were to be vessels of light, giving forth the light of Christ, or in other words, descriptive of Himself until His return. How far the Church, as a whole, has fulfilled its responsibilities, let the reader judge as he looks around him to-day !

The appearance of the Lord as He stands contemplating, and measuring up judicially, the corrupt state of the Church, was so awe inspiring that John fell at His feet as dead ! In this lies the explanation of the whole scene. It was not that the Lord's heart had changed towards those who were truly His. There was the same consideration and tender love as was manifested at the passover scene in John xiii., when John leaned on His breast at supper. That remained unchangeable ; but here He is manifesting, by His attitude, what He thought of the condition of ecclesiastical corruption which had been brought

about during those very few years (probably not more than 40) since Paul had completed his work in these Gentile cities of Asia.

The dealing of the Lord with His servant is exceedingly affecting :—

“ He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the First and the Last. I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of hades.”—*Rev. i.*, 17, 18.

John is fully reassured as he feels the touch of the same hand that had once washed the disciples' feet, and hears the same voice that, in the days of old, had fallen with such sweetness on his ear. He had to learn, to an extent never known before, that while Christ, the Living One, invested with the plenitude of authority over both living and dead, will maintain everything that is of God, He *must* judge and bring to nothing all that is merely the product of man's own will and pride. This is the key to what follows in chapters ii. and iii.

2.—“ The things that are.”

It has been many times stated, and proved with sufficient clearness, that the expression

“the things that are,” takes in that ecclesiastical system known as “Christendom,” as a whole; not only that which is *vital*, or that which is the fruit of the Spirit’s work, but the whole system as it has taken form in man’s hands.

To the merely superficial reader, it would perhaps appear as if the seven churches, as they existed in the Apostle’s own time, were solely concerned in the Lord’s searching messages sent through His servant John. The interpretation has often been limited in this way, and, as with many other Scriptures, the moral bearing for us has been overlooked.

On the other hand, much of the value of the instruction has been lost by a too rigid application of what might be called the prophetic view, viz., that the seven churches are typical of certain phases or developments of the Church’s history which were to follow one another, commencing from the initial defection of Ephesus (they had “left their first love”), and ending with the rationalistic indifference and luke-warmness of Laodicea. There is, of course, much that is true and helpful in this view (as we shall presently see), but an exaggerated adherence to it has led some Christians to apply, with a precision which is very far from edifying, certain of these phases to particular

associations of people existing at different periods of the Church's history. The result has oftentimes been invidious and embarrassing, particularly when *Philadelphia* has been in question.

The writer ventures to suggest, for the reader's consideration, that there are three aspects in which these addresses should be viewed, and that it is only by keeping all three in mind that the true moral bearing of the addresses can be reached :

1st.—As describing what actually existed in the Apostle's own day. There were, of course, many other assemblies besides these, even in the comparatively small province of Asia, but these were selected as containing within themselves features which were characteristic, more or less, of the whole ecclesiastical system. They show to us what rapid strides had been already made in the direction of worldliness and clericalism.

2nd.—These seven churches will be found, on examination not only to represent that which was temporary, and peculiar to the Apostle's day, but to afford a faithful picture of what "Christendom," as a whole, would present throughout its history until the Lord's return. While there is much to be commended, and the Lord faithfully takes account of every little bit, however feeble,

that is acceptable to Himself, yet we have here the germ of every evil that we have ever read of, or witnessed for ourselves, in the long period of the decline of Christendom.

There have always been, from John's own time, and will be until the end is reached, conditions of things which are typified by Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, the whole seven, and the privilege and duty of the faithful saint is to have his spiritual senses exercised to discern the workings of any and every form of declension and evil, wherever it may present itself, and to be an "overcomer." For we are rather apt to forget that while, on the one hand, the traits of a Philadelphian may be discovered in a saint who appears to be more connected (ecclesiastically) with Sardis or Laodicea—on the other hand, the cold, dead orthodoxy of Sardis, or the self-complacency of Laodicea may often be seen in those who, as to their position, may think of themselves as Philadelphians.

What we have to do is not to be claiming for ourselves any position at all amidst the general confusion and failure, but to take heed to the Lord's voice—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Note—not one church

only but "the churches" all of them) This is seven times repeated, and it is very plain that we shall miss the mark if we do not keep an open ear for *all* that the Lord has graciously given for our instruction in these addresses.

3rd.—Bearing in mind what has been already said, we can now briefly refer to what is exceedingly interesting and helpful, that the seven churches are presented in such an order as to give a complete and consecutive view of the course of Christendom historically. The characteristics of all these assemblies, while, as we have seen, they could have been found existing at the same moment all through the Church's history, have undoubtedly, at certain marked epochs, come into special prominence, and have been noted even by ordinary observers.

The value of this to the saints consists in the fact that each development or phase has been thus fully foreseen and provided for from the very outset, so that the saints, in every period, have been able to find light and instruction already at hand for their guidance.

For the sake of any reader who may not have had his attention called to the historical order in which these phases of the Church have been developed, it may be stated, in the

briefest way that EPHESUS marks the earliest and perhaps most serious stage of the general declension which had begun to set in, even in the Apostle's time ; SMYRNA is the period of persecution which succeeded it, while PERGAMOS marks the coming-in of the tide of the world's patronage of Christianity under the Emperor Constantine. This, no doubt, made things easier for the saints, but the effect generally was to bring about the development of the clerical and popish idea, which is so clearly embodied in THYATIRA.

Out of Thyatira sprang the " Protestant " phase, spoken of, with great solemnity, in the message to SARDIS, in the words, " Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Protestantism maintained the supremacy of the Scriptures, which led on to a very widespread spiritual revival and return to the truth, portrayed under PHILADELPHIA ; while (as was pointed out by a servant of the Lord some years ago) the right of private judgment, which was also claimed by Protestantism, has degenerated into what is characteristic of LAODICEA—that self-complacency and rationalistic indifference which, above all things, is nauseous to the Lord, and must be refused.

Without venturing too much into detail, it may be said that there are clear indications

that, while the first three of these phases have (from the *historical* point of view) seen their fulfilment, and have taken their place as matters of history, the last four will run on concurrently to the end ; so that in these four we have a very definite idea of what will be the state of things when the moment arrives for the fulfilment of the Lord's words, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The beloved Apostle by whom these gracious words were recorded, is the one evidently fitted to give this most graphic picture of the condition of things in Christendom out of which we shall be delivered.

The promises given, by way of encouragement, to the "overcomer," in each of these seven phases or conditions, are singularly appropriate to the circumstances of the moment, and will bear the close and affectionate consideration of the reader over and over again.

Now, the remainder of the subject, viz., "The things which shall be," involves so much that it will be as well to devote a chapter specially to the consideration of it. This will be our closing one.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM, AND THE ETERNAL STATE—*continued.*

The third of the divisions of the Book of Revelation, as is indicated in our last chapter, viz. :

“ The things that shall be after these.”

(*i.e.*, after the closing-up of the “ Church ” period) is so immense and far-reaching in its scope and character that it constitutes practically a subject complete in itself. The limits of our space forbid anything beyond a brief and general survey of the moral features of it, as connected with John’s ministry.

Now at the opening of chapter iv. of the Revelation, we find the whole scene changed. The Apostle had been contemplating, in prophetic vision, the prolonged and always downward course of that which was set up to be the bearer of light amid the darkness of this world. He sees the light gradually growing dimmer and dimmer, as the centuries roll along, until, at last, it flickers out altogether. Without giving the rein to mere imagination, one can think of the Apostle as, for the

moment, lost in wonder at this fresh discovery of the failure and incompetency of man, even under the most advantageous conditions. If the breakdown of the Jewish system was appalling, what must be that of the system which has been named after Christ Himself !

The faithful heart of the Apostle turns to the Person in whom he had always found his rest and solace and in response to his silent appeal he hears the voice of his beloved Lord speaking now, not on the earth, as in chapter i., but from heaven :—

“ After these things, I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven ; and the first voice which I heard as it were of a trumpet talking with me [see chapter i.], which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be after these things.”—*Rev. iv., 1.*

The voice of Christ, clear and melodious as the trumpet of Jubilee, bids His servant leave the scene of breakdown and dishonour, and come up to where all is in order, where everything is a reflection of Him who sits upon the throne of everlasting righteousness and love. We have no space to go into detail as to what John sees after he has, in vision, reached the scene from whence the voice was speaking ; but chapters iv. and v. make one thing very clear, that the redeemed company, about whom John had written in his Gospel

and Epistles, are safely housed there, that they are in an attitude of repose and perfect confidence, and that they are, in fact, sharing in the counsels of heaven in connection with what is about to be described in subsequent chapters in this book.

How, and when did they reach there ?

The answer to this question is, no doubt, that which has often been stated, and John himself had been instructed in it long before. Between Chapters iii. and iv. it seems evident that the first part of the "hour," which the Lord had spoken of in the Gospel (Chapter v. 28), had arrived, and that the "resurrection of the righteous" had taken place, as well as their translation (together with those members of Christ's company still alive and remaining on the earth 1 Thess. iv., 17), to be "with Christ." His own words were, "that where I am, there ye may be also." The ecclesiastical system of Christendom, with which they had been connected, will continue for a time, as a mass of mere profession, designated by the suggestive title of "Babylon," the stronghold of luxury and corruption, to be utterly overthrown eventually by Christ Himself.

Those who are "Christ's" will be

accompanied in their departure (as we are assured in 2 Thess. ii.) by the Holy Spirit, whose presence here had been the great barrier against the incoming tide of lawlessness and disorder ; and then there will be nothing to hinder the full development of evil, and of the great apostacy of Christendom, which had already set in. The long-threatened, but long-deferred, judgment will speedily follow.

The succeeding 13 chapters, *i.e.*, from vi. to xviii., present to us, not in the form of a consecutive history, but in lines running concurrently, the summing-up and ripening of all the evil principles, whether ecclesiastical or political, which have ever darkened this world. When those "that are Christ's" have been removed from the scene, all those forces of self-will and antagonism to God which have been moving slowly along the track of the ages will develop with amazing rapidity, and their judgment will be equally swift.

There is, also, in these chapters, the picking-up of the threads of prophecy with regard to God's ancient people, and the gathering together of the godly remnant out

of the sea of nations. (See John xxi., 11). This remnant, purified as silver by the fires of oppression and persecution, are to form the circle through which Christ's earthly government will be administered from Mount Zion.

The development and rise of the head of the *revived* Roman Empire, described as "the beast rising out of the sea," together with "the beast coming out of the earth," which is none other than the false prophet or the anti-Christ, both under the direct control of the powers of darkness, and working in association one with the other, are also vividly portrayed.

The last scene of all in this series of chapters is the utter destruction of that great system of ecclesiastical pretension described as "Babylon," which, under various forms and names, has insulted God, and enslaved and persecuted man, even from the days of Cain himself. The judgment and breaking to pieces of "Babylon" leaves the way clear for the coming out of Christ to take up the reins of government here on God's behalf; and accordingly we find, in chapter xix., that the moment for the celebration of the "marriage of the Lamb" has arrived, and His wife, the true bride, in contradistinction to the false and corrupt pretender

to that place of favour, whose complete downfall had just been witnessed, "hath made herself ready."

This is followed by the coming forth of Christ, who is described here as "The Faithful and the True," characters in which He has been known to those to whom He has endeared Himself, and having a name with which John has already familiarised us—"The Word of God."

One pauses to meditate upon the contrast between this presentation of the "Word of God," and that which we have in the 1st Chapter of John's Gospel. The reader will look at these two verses side by side, and will perhaps gain a fresh insight into the perfections of Christ, both as the One able to make God known in His infinite grace, and as the One to whom all judgment has been committed

John i., 14.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."

Rev. xix., 11-13.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God."

John sees, in his vision, the utter destruction, under the hand of Christ, of those earthly powers energized by Satan. The beast and the false prophet, *i.e.*, the political and religious heads of that lawless world-system which is even now ripening for judgment, are to be taken alive, and cast into the lake of fire, while their followers find their doom in death and hades, there to await their resurrection for the judgment of the great white throne.

Chapter xx. opens out a further vista of events which remind us again of the words of Christ Himself in John's Gospel :

“ Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”—
John xii., 31.

These words, although true *now*, in a moral sense, to the believer who, by the light of the Spirit (as we have already seen in looking at the effect of the Spirit's presence) is guided into a right estimate both of the world and of its prince, are to be fully made good in the day of which John speaks in this 20th of Revelation. The complete downfall of Satan (who had previously been cast down from heaven to earth, chapter xii.), and his removal from the scene of his maleficent activities, form the last event preparatory to the inauguration of Christ's reign.

John gives, in this chapter, but a scanty reference to the millennial reign of Him into whose hands everything in the "world to come" is committed, and who alone is able to bring order out of the moral chaos, and to deal effectually with that system of authority which, for well-nigh 6,000 years, has been used to gratify man's will and pride. The beneficence of this reign is vividly portrayed in "Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms," and the New Testament writers generally are, more or less, full of it. For John is reserved the wholly unique unfolding of the relations between the heavenly and earthly parts of the "world to come," or, in other words, the position of the New Jerusalem as the great vessel of light and blessing to the nations during the millennium. This we shall look at, a little later on, when we come to chapter xxi.

In this chapter xx. we have a brief, and yet comprehensive and striking, view of the whole series of events which prepare the way for, and close up with, the eternal state, when God will be fully displayed in the new heavens and the new earth.

Perhaps the most awe-inspiring of these events is the final settlement of the question of good and evil in what is known as the judgment of the great white throne. It is

depicted in verses 11 to 15 of this 20th of Revelation, and probably exceeds, in its solemnity and terror, all the scenes which this world will have witnessed. It opens with the "resurrection of the unjust," who are raised, not to enter into life, but for the judgment of Christ seated on a throne emblematic of exaltation and absolute righteousness. This again takes us back to the words of Christ which the Apostle quotes in his Gospel :

" They that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."—*John v., 29.*

The righteous dead, from the beginning of the world's history, will have been raised long before, and will have entered into their blessing, whatever its measure, in association with Christ. (See verse 4 of this chapter.) The unjust are reserved until the very end of God's dealings with this earth, to meet their doom in company, apparently, with those intelligences of another order who, even before man was put upon the earth, were beguiled and turned aside by the arch-deceiver himself (See Jude 6).

In the verses which immediately follow (chapter xxi., 1-8), we get the only picture given in Scripture of what is called the "eternal state." The picture is made up, so to speak, of but a few touches, but it is

delineated by a Master-hand, the hand of the Spirit of God Himself, through the vessel chosen for the purpose. It is brought within the reach of our finite minds by being set in contrast with that which has been our experience here, that which goes to make up our present condition of weakness and conflict. All that is old, and worn out, and corrupt, will be displaced by what is new :

“ Behold, I make all things new.”—*Verse 5.*

The great Source and Fountain of good Himself, towards whom the heart of every upright soul, throughout the ages, has turned with longing desires, amidst the circumstances and perplexities of their time-state, will be for ever within reach, and will be displayed fully in His holiness and love :

“ Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.”—*Verse 3.*

And, further than this, He will, as with His own hand of infinite love, wipe away every trace of the sorrow which has been the portion, more or less, of His people here ; and the many things which have *caused* the sorrow will for ever cease to be :—

“ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away.”—*Verse 4.*

On the other hand, the eternal portion of the haters and despisers of God, and of all good, is pictured—although within the compass of but one verse (verse 8)—in terms that are infinitely appalling, and soul-subduing. In the light of it, how touching the offer in verse 6 :—

“ I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely ; ”

reminding us of similar words in the Gospel of John—“ If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.”—(John iv., 10).

It only remains to add a few words with regard to “ the Holy City,” the New Jerusalem, which John had seen in his vision of the eternal state (verse 2) having the appearance of a bride, in all the freshness and attractiveness of her bridal attire. She is not upon the earth, but is seen, as it were, “ coming out of heaven.” In other words, she is heavenly, and she takes her place as “ the tabernacle of God ” throughout eternal ages.

It was evidently of special importance that John should have a nearer and more detailed view of this “ Holy City,” and accordingly we find that another vision of it is granted to

him. In verse 9 of this chapter, he is bidden to come and see it, and, for this purpose, he is carried to a "great and high mountain," where, with gaze undimmed by the mists and clouds of earth, he can contemplate its stately proportions, and mark all its perfections as the setting-forth of God's glory.

In this two-fold symbol of "the bride," and the "Holy City coming down from God out of heaven," it is easy to discern the Church, which has been in process of formation since Pentecost, and we may be quite assured that not a vestige of man's corrupt work will form part of it.

"There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie."—
Verse 27.

It is the display, in the presence of the universe, of the company which we have already contemplated as having been given to Christ, and they are adorned with all that which has been of Divine workmanship in them, or, in other words, the fruit and result of the Spirit's work during the long, and apparently dreary, period of Christ's absence. It is Christ "glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe." (2 *Thess. i.*, 10).

It is interesting to recall, for a moment,

some of the words in which John had previously spoken concerning those who go to compose this city :

“ And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou has sent Me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved Me.”—*John xvii.*, 22, 23.

Whatever the external failure of the Church may have been during its prolonged sojourn upon the earth, it is certain that in the world to come, as well as in the eternal state, there will be nothing to frustrate or hinder its fulfilment of the purpose for which it has been formed, viz., to be a setting forth of the wonderful character of God, as it has been made known in Christ, and wrought in the saints by the Spirit.

John says of this city :—

“ Having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”—*Rev xxi.*, 11.

Inasmuch as the “jasper,” as we know it, is opaque, and has none of the characteristics of crystal about it, there is not much difficulty in accepting what has been said by the learned in such matters, viz., that the “stone most precious” is really the diamond. The perfect fitness of this is evident.

Everybody knows that the diamond will split up the light that shines upon it into its seven constituent colours ; and so here we have the beautiful thought that the heavenly city will reflect the moral perfections of God in all their seven-fold variety and brilliancy.

“ The nations shall walk in the light of it.”
— *Verse 24.*

Now, “ light ” in Scripture is the beautiful symbol constantly used to convey the idea of the revelation of God to man. Applying the meaning of it in this case, we find that, in some way beyond the reach of our present limited capacity to understand, the nations upon the earth during the millennial reign of Christ, or, as it is called, “ the world (or age) to come,” will learn, through the holy Jerusalem, the true inward meaning of all God’s ways in view of the glory of Christ.

Then will be fulfilled the words which another Apostle was instructed to write :

“ That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”—
Eph. ii., 7.

The company which, through nearly 2,000 years of vicissitude and storm, have constituted, by the Spirit, the true dwelling place of God here on earth, and in whose hearts the Spirit has been patiently producing

and bringing forth what is of Christ, will then be the collective witness of God's wonderful grace in all its actings. Then will be understood fully how it was possible for Him to maintain, under such seemingly impossible conditions, the light of Christ in the saints, when Christ Himself was no longer upon the earth.

In other words, the mystery, as it is made known by the Spirit to us in this present time, will be fully unveiled.

“ God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be ;
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.”
