

Requests and Replies.

Would you kindly mention the best books *pro* and *con* on 'Prayers for the Dead?'—G. H.

Pro—Mortimer's *Catholic Faith and Practice*. Part ii. (Longmans, 1898).

Con—Wright's *Intermediate State* (Nisbet, 1900).
EDITOR.

You would do us missionaries in the foreign field, as well as many ministers of the gospel, a great service, if you could either yourself, or if one of your esteemed contributors, could advise us on the matter of commentaries on the various books of the Bible. We cannot afford to buy more than at most one good commentary on each book, and we are quite at a loss which to select. What we need is a commentary which will expound the text verse by verse, and offer such suggestions as will help us in preaching on any given verse.

There are, we know, excellent volumes among the various series, such as the *Pulpit, Speaker, Lange*, etc., as well as commentaries on single books, such as *Godet* and others, but how is an isolated missionary or minister to know which to buy?

Possibly there may be a book on the subject more recent than Spurgeon's, if so, I shall be very grateful if you would mention it. If not, would it be too

great a task to give a little advice in your much appreciated magazine, even if only about commentaries on the more important books of the Bible?

I shall look out for your kind reply in *The Expository Times*, under the heading, "Requests and Replies"—Advice about Commentaries.—A. C. M.

IN 1893 Professor Marvin Vincent of Union Theological Seminary, New York, published (London: Nisbet—note the date 1893, there is none on the title-page) a *Student's New Testament Handbook*, but it is incomplete, indiscriminating, and sometimes inaccurate. In 1896 the late Principal Cave of Hackney College, published (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark) a second and much enlarged edition of his *Introduction to Theology*, which is really a literature of modern theology in all its departments, very full and very accurate, but without discrimination. The most useful book is also the most recent,—Professor Peake's *Guide to Biblical Study* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1897). It does not contain lists, as the other books do, and it is scarcely full enough to meet the needs of everybody, but it is severely judicial in its praise and blame, and is altogether a most instructive book.
EDITOR.

The Judaean Ministry of Jesus.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DEHANY BERNARD, M.A., CANON OF WELLS.

III.

The Teaching in the House.

THE first and most important stage of this ministry was in the City itself, and there occur the only two incidents by which its character is illustrated, the Testimony in the Temple, and the Teaching in the House. They exhibit very different aspects of the Lord's action, and in their external scenes present a striking contrast, which, but for the extreme brevity and simplicity of the narrative, might be described as picturesque. The one is in the open day, in the place of concourse, a rebuke for public sin, a voice of authority and prophecy. The other is in the stillness of night, in the

seclusion of the chamber, in intercourse with an individual but representative mind, teaching what ought to have been known, telling what had not been known, a voice of instruction and revelation.

The visit of Nicodemus has historical interest from the nature of the circumstances and the character of the man, and also from the evidence which it gives of what was passing in men's minds, under the impression made by the words and works of Jesus. Far greater is the spiritual and doctrinal interest attaching to this interview. Un-

doubtedly much more was said than is written here; but we have the salient points which fastened on the mind of the hearer,—that silent unnamed hearer, whose close companionship, sympathetic apprehension, and retentive memory made him the chosen witness of his Master's deeper sayings. Brief and abrupt as are the words reported, there is no question of the treasures of truth which they contain, of the leading lights which they have supplied to Christian thought, or of the convictions and experiences, the preachings and teachings, the discussions and controversies, of which they have been the source in all the Church and in all ages. Hence, as we approach the consideration of the words, a cloud of doctrinal associations and conventional applications rise before us. But it is a cloud which must be dispelled, or rather we must get behind it, in order simply to hear the words as they were spoken; and to hear them thus is the only safe basis of interpretation. Their place in the history, their relation to the circumstances of the occasion and to the mind addressed must, in all reason, be taken to give their primary intention; and only in that light are they here considered.

From the same point of view, I am constrained to limit the subject of consideration to vv. 1-16; concurring with some later commentators, who read the entire passage as only in its first part the words of Jesus, and in its second part as the reflections of the evangelist. The sudden change of language (it may be said with reverence) would not have been suited to this stage of the manifestation, or to the person addressed. 'Son of Man,' was the Lord's adopted designation, and had already been twice used in the conversation with Nicodemus. To change it (as it is changed in the later verses) for 'Son of God,' and to speak of 'believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God,' would seem an anachronism and an unlikely shock and offence to an inquiring Pharisee. Furthermore, the second part of the passage (16-21) has, on the face of it, the character of a retrospective review of a past history, seen under the light of a perfected revelation. I therefore read the chapter, as we are assisted to read it, by the distinction of paragraphs in the Revised Version.

'There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, the same came to Jesus by night.' What kind of visitor is this? A man of the Pharisees, the typical religionists

and believers. They hold the faith and keep the Law, and surround both faith and Law with a fence of traditional observance and opinion. 'After the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee,' said one who knew the system by thorough and honest experience. We know the faults inherent in it, and to what an extent they prevailed in self-satisfied bigotry and a jealous love of power and repute. Yet were there among them men of just and sincere minds, and one such is here before us. He is candid, and therefore comes to inquire. He is cautious, and therefore comes by night. To a man of traditional prejudices candour is hard of attainment; to a Pharisee it must have been hard indeed; and Nicodemus must have had conflicts with himself before he could resolve to do what he did. Caution seemed imposed by circumstances. As a ruler of the Jews and a teacher of eminence, his movements at this crisis would be matters of both party and public interest, and he therefore came to the house in the dark to converse, if he might, without observation or distraction.

What then are the questions which press upon his mind? They are the questions of the day, which are moving the multitude, but which appeal in a special sense to men of his order, who ought to judge of them, if any can. The first question is that of the *Kingdom of God*. Is it coming? and what will it be? The proclamation that 'the Kingdom of God is at hand' gave the reason for John's baptism and the power to his ministry. It had resounded through the land, and now, in the action of Jesus was thrilling the heart of Jerusalem. Then, what is to be thought of the *baptism* associated with it? It is a novel introduction, and affronting to Israel, as implying that the children of Abraham are not, as such, the heirs of the kingdom. By what authority is it administered? A deputation of priests and Levites, sent by the Pharisees, had asked this question of John; and had left him saying, 'Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor the Prophet?' He had answered by pointing to a greater Person who would baptize with the Spirit. That Person has appeared, awakening new ideas round him, teaching as one having authority, and not as the scribes, doing works beyond human power, which could not be denied. It is become an urgent question, What is to be thought of *Him*?

With these three questions in his mind, concerning the Kingdom, the Baptism, and Jesus Himself, Nicodemus has sought a private interview, while the world is going to rest. He opens it with respectful words, stating the conviction at which he and others have arrived, and the reason for it. 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.' The Lord answers him throughout as a true man and sincere inquirer, and goes straight to the first point on which he needs to be enlightened. 'Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' It is assumed that the immediate question is the kingdom of God, the great subject of prophecy and of Jewish expectation. The brief words imply its true character, and treat it as a matter of present and personal concern. Not in another world, but here and now, the kingdom is coming, and in a sense is come; but the external changes and visible glories of which Nicodemus thinks have disappeared, while the one important point for him, as for every man, his own relation to it, is at once suggested. Without a great change in a man, it is not only beyond his attainment, but beyond his perception. He is not able to see it (*οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν*), and the words have their literal meaning. Being a spiritual order of things, it needs spiritual capacity to apprehend it, which man has not by nature. What he wants is not information or improvement, but another birth. He must be born (*ἀνωθεν*) from above, as the word more usually means, but in this place it must be rendered 'anew,' as the answer of Nicodemus shows. 'How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' He speaks in perplexity; for he knows but of one kind of birth; and the latter question is only the common form of expressing an impossible idea. He speaks also with feeling, as a man advanced in life, 'How can a man be born, when he is old?' What kind of birth is meant, and by what power effected? The reply is direct, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Jesus speaks as exponent of the kingdom, shall we not rather say, as Lord of it? with solemn repetition of 'Amen, amen, I say to thee.' The new birth, then, expresses the communication of a new life, and the entrance into new relations—such as by

nature we cannot have. It comes to a man, *ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος*, out of water and spirit. The two words are in the same construction, and I cannot see the right of translators to insert before 'spirit' the article which is not there. It is in the next sentence that the explanation begins to appear. Throughout the discourse the steps of thought are distinct. We are now led from the general idea of seeing the kingdom to the definite act of entering into it. None but the person born anew is able to enter it; and that birth is to be derived from water and spirit, both, as stated here, being real and concurrent factors in the result. That baptism, a positive ordinance and external act, should be one of these factors would seem reasonable to the Pharisee, and it gave an answer to one of the questions which he had in his mind. In late times men, possessed with the greater truth,—that concerning the Spirit,—have thought that the conjunction could not have been meant, and have sought by various shifts of interpretation to set it aside. I say in late times, for, as Hooker writes of these controversialists in his day, 'To hide the general consent of antiquity, agreeing to the literal interpretation, they cunningly affirm that "certain" have taken those words as meant of material water, whereas they know that of all the ancients there is not one to be named that ever did otherwise, either expound or allege this place than as implying external baptism' (Bk. v. chap. 59). Neither ancients nor moderns can do otherwise, if they will but take the natural meaning of the words, and have respect to the circumstances under which they were spoken. It is a divine sentence, announcing a principle of the kingdom, uttered in its initial stage, but contemplating its permanent order. It asserts an ordained conjunction of the water and the Spirit: for the new birth and the entrance into the kingdom, but it does no more. What is the nature of the connexion, whether simultaneous or otherwise? What is the relation of the ordinance to the life? What is its proper office and separate efficacy in the entrance into the kingdom? These and the like questions remain for after consideration under the general light of the word and of the facts of human history. We know how they have been dealt with, in guiding words of the apostolic writings, in fervid utterances of the Fathers, in the elaborate systematizing of the School-

men, and then in Roman, Anglican, Lutheran, Calvinistic confessions. These large discussions are outside the present purpose, which is concerned only with the brief word of Jesus, which underlies them all, and with its primary intention at the time. It is certain only that baptism, as then in question and as known to Nicodemus, had a double character. In regard to the past, it was an act of repentance and an ordinance for the remission of sins; in regard to the future, it was a passage into a new dispensation, being administered as preliminary to the coming kingdom. These fundamental characters remained afterwards in the institution of Christian baptism. Its first word was, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins' (Ac 2³⁸), or (as spoken by the Lord's messenger to Saul) 'Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name' (22¹⁶); while it was at the same time a passage into a new spiritual position, being an admission into the kingdom as by a legal act and deed under the seal of the King.

Regarded in the light of our Lord's words as a factor in the new birth, baptism is, on the face of it, a means symbolic and instrumental, having effect from positive ordinance of God, and through voluntary use by man. Very different is the other factor, the Spirit. That is essential from the nature of the case, and independent of human action. If the water is the sacrament of the new birth, the Spirit is the power of it. Therefore the discourse, while asserting the obligation of the first condition, dwells on the necessity of the second. The Lord speaks as having the truth of things before Him. He sees two kinds of life, and two worlds or regions of life to which they respectively belong, distinguished as flesh and spirit. The one life is derived by natural generation; not so the other. The life of the flesh we know; not indeed in its essence, for life is a mystery; but in its beginning and its end, in its activities and manifestations, physical, intellectual, moral, in its relations with surrounding conditions and its part in the visible scene, in its powers and weaknesses, its limitations and frailty, its insecurity, brevity, mortality. In the last respects it is like all lower life in nature, animal and vegetable, 'All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass.' But the visible scene is not the whole of things, and the life in

the flesh is not the whole of man. In virtue of the immortality of the soul he has potential relations with another order of things, not seen and eternal, the world of spirit; where in the manifested presence of the living God are powers and intelligences that do His will, and the reign of truth and righteousness, and the seat of eternal judgment and the glory of perfect love. This is the Kingdom of God; and when it is said that 'the Kingdom of God is at hand,' 'is come nigh unto you,' or 'is among you,' it is a proclamation that some action of God is taking place, which brings that world nearer to men than it had been, which discloses afresh its character and principles and powers, and calls them to enter in. But the life which enters the region of spirit must itself be spirit; and in order to life there must be birth, and that too from its proper source. As 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' so 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' The same word, 'spirit,' here and elsewhere expresses both that which generates and that which is generated, showing their common nature. The generating power can be no other than the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of life (*τὸ κύριον καὶ τὸ ζωοποιόν*), and on the other hand, 'that which is born' is evidently the spirit in man, quickened by that power into actual and conscious life. The relations between these two are thenceforth so close that it is not always easy to discern in the language of Scripture which is directly intended. Sometimes, as when it speaks, of 'the Spirit himself witnessing with our spirit' (Ro 8¹⁶), the distinction is expressed. But often it may be a question, whether the primary thought is that of the Holy Spirit working in man, or the human spirit wrought upon by God. The Lord uses the word 'birth' for the origination of spiritual life, not as a figure of speech, but as the appropriate statement of the fact. There is thorough analogy between the one case and the other. Birth in the flesh is not a separate accident. It has its natural origin from another life, and its antecedent process and conditions. It is the same in the other case. In human nature reason, conscience, the moral sense create a capacity for conception, but not for spiritual origination. The life must come from without, and it does come from the impact of truth upon the soul, from the Word in some form or other brought home by the quickening Spirit. Thus St. Peter addresses Christians as 'having been begotten again, not of

corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth' (1 P 1²³). This incipient life may have to pass through a hidden and doubtful process before it issues into light; and when it does, the birth (as the same passage tells us) has to be followed by nourishment and growth, being the beginning and not the completion of its course. The spiritual life must grow and prevail in constant contact with the life of nature and with the course of this world, through those experiences of the double life in the flesh and in the spirit which every Christian knows. This fundamental distinction, pregnant with practical consequences, is here for the first time set forth in the words which explain to Nicodemus the necessity of the new birth. The explanation is sufficient, and should put an end to wonder and doubt. 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born anew.'

Jesus speaks of a universal necessity, but He says, not We, but Ye; as Himself standing apart in solitary exemption. But had He not Himself received a baptism both of water and the Spirit? True, but the baptism of water was not sought for remission of sins, but was an act of obedience in the fulfilment of all righteousness; and the baptism of the Spirit conveyed no newness of life, but was an anointing of the Son for His mission to mankind. For us the Spirit is the giver of life, being the Spirit of God who alone can give it, acting towards us by a will above our own, and in ways that we can not trace. The words which say so may be read simply as a statement, the term spirit (*πνεῦμα*) being taken here in its proper meaning, as in the rest of this passage and elsewhere. Thus, for instance, Wycliffe renders, 'The Spirit brethith where he wole, and thou herist his vois, but thou wost not fro whennus he cometh, ne whidir he goith.' But if, after the general sense of versions and commentaries, we see here a similitude, and change 'spirit' into 'wind,' we gain from the illustration a help to our thoughts, which Nicodemus also needed. The wind is, of all the powers of nature, the most typical of freedom and force. Invisible, rising from we know not where, and on its way we know not whither, its effects are felt and its sound is heard. It seems, as Godet says, 'Like an irruption of the infinite into the finite'; the world of nature suggesting, as is frequent, the realities of a higher order than its own. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof,

but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.' We hear more than the sound, the *voicē* (*τὴν φωνήν*). The voice of the Spirit is the Word; and we hear it truly and in its proper power when it becomes a living voice from the hearts, the lives, the characters of men. To this result therefore the discourse passes at once, disregarding irregularity in the form of comparison. 'So is every one that is born of the Spirit.' By the perfect participle (*γεγεννημένος*) attention is fixed, not on the event of birth, but on the state ensuing. It is state of life in the spirit, in which the man proves his new birth by immediate converse with God, and by an affinity with things eternal, in judgments and affections, aims and motives, which are not of this world. It is a state in which the same Holy Spirit who is the author of the new life still acts to preserve, revive, or perfect it, in temper, character, and conduct, which are touched with the breath of heaven. The spiritual element pervades with its virtue and fragrance the whole moral being, and the character silently bespeaks its origin and its destination. As to the worldly character, we know the influences in this world which form it, and the objects in this world which are its goal. Not so the character born from above.

Its source and its destination are alike beyond our sight. We do not see that Great Spirit from which the sons of God derive their birth; we do not see that heavenly society of the spirits of just men made perfect towards which they are journeying. Whence they come and whither they go we see not, and that because they are born of the Spirit (*Mozley's University Sermons*, p. 242).

Nicodemus still finds what he hears beyond his apprehension. 'How (he says) can these things be?' or rather, 'How can they come to be?' (*δύναται γενέσθαι*). He may need information, but why this unintelligent perplexity? It was because the Pharisaic habit of thought, conversant only with the Law, gave no room for this spiritual doctrine. Justly he is answered by another question, 'Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things?' It belonged to teachers of Israel to discern the deeper truths in their Scriptures, and to draw them forth for instruction and guidance. Had Nicodemus been such a teacher, he would have known enough of the action of God with men to make him recognize in the words of Jesus the true interpretation of the older teaching. The dispensation of the Spirit

was not yet. The work of the Son must be accomplished and redemption wrought before (in the fuller sense) the coming of the Holy Ghost. Nicodemus could not know on this subject what St. Paul knew and what we know. But in the voices of the prophets, read in the synagogue every Sabbath Day; in the Psalms, which had so large a place in Jewish religion, the doctrine of the Spirit was expressed and illustrated. The sound of the wind, which blows where it lists, is

there heard, sometimes with intermittent force, sometimes in sudden gusts of faith and fervour; manifestations which cannot be mistaken of a life which is born from above in the spirit of man quickened by the Spirit of God. On the threshold of the Coming Kingdom and of the revelation of 'heavenly things,' there was need to impress afresh these truths which ought in measure to have been known by a true teacher of Israel.

(To be continued.)

At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

THE TRUE CHRIST AND THE FALSE CHRIST.

By J. GARNIER. (*George Allen*. Crown 8vo, Two Vols. pp. 329, 340. 5s. each.)

There are two volumes. One describes the true Christ, the other the false. Or rather, one describes the true doctrine about Christ, the other the false doctrine. For it is not Christ, but our thoughts of Him and of His work that are the subject of Mr. Garnier's volumes.

Now, the true Christ is not found in Paganism, in Romanism, in Ritualism. He is found in Evangelicalism. But Evangelicalism is of two kinds. The one kind teaches a doctrine of expiation, and that is a false Christ. The other teaches a doctrine of spiritual fellowship through faith: that is the true Christ. The evangelicalism that teaches substitution is as false as ritualism, for it keeps Christ outside of us and makes Him do everything for us. The true Christ is found in the evangelicalism which unites us with Christ by faith, so that we suffer and die with Him, and then rise and reign with Him.

So Mr. Garnier's interesting and capable volumes make all turn on the nature of faith. And he is right. All does turn on the nature of faith. And a Christ that is not revealed *in* us, so as to produce good works, is not the true Christ.

The volumes are most attractively printed and bound. That is worth mentioning, for we are predisposed in their favour thereby, and so the reading is a pleasure from beginning to end.

Concerning Jesus is a good title for a book of studies in the life and character of our Lord. Its author is the Rev. Henry Hewett, A.T.S. It

contains nine chapters or sermons, one on the Homelessness of Jesus, one on His Happiness, one on His Manliness, one on His Womanliness, and so forth. Each chapter has something in it that is its own. The publisher is Mr. Allenson (6d.).

WHAT IS TRUTH? BY THE REV. ROBERT WATERS, A.K.C.L. (*Banks*. 8vo, pp. 498. 10s. 6d.)

Immense volumes under general titles like 'What is Truth?' are usually disappointing. We are not able to take in knowledge in large quantities at a time. We resent being set right (or being considered wrong) on every conceivable subject in one day. Such books, besides, are invariably ugly to look at. And so we are set against such a book as this before we open it.

Perhaps that is why we have not enjoyed it. The prejudice has never, perhaps, been removed. For it is a reasonable serious account of the religion of the Christ, according to the Old and New Testaments, and of the corruptions that after New Testament times have been introduced into it. Serious and most earnest the author is, and the things he lays his finger on are real evils, unmistakable corruptions, and he does well to expose them. If his book had had a more limited title, and if it had been written in a more lively manner, we might all have heard Mr. Waters gladly and done many things because of him.

After the death of the Rev. R. W. Barbour of Bonskeid, some of his poetry and prose was collected in a handsome volume which was presented to his private friends. That volume has been