

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIII

JANUARY 1965

No. 1

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecraig, Sydney N.S.W.

PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PETTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

*Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1*

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

A WORD OF good cheer seldom comes amiss!

That is why we are particularly pleased to have for the opening issue of 1965 an article by our esteemed contributor, Mr. Edward T. Wood, entitled *The Abiding Presence*. Some readers will recognise this as the substance of an address he gave at Wildfell Hall, Catford, on the 3rd October. We trust that publication in WORDS OF HELP will benefit a much wider circle.

It is a pleasure also to publish the eighth of Mr. Graham's studies in the Book of Job, a portion of scripture which tends to be neglected, but which has, unquestionably, a message for our own day more pertinent than is generally recognised. Many expressions of appreciation have already been received, and we recommend our readers to preserve all that has been written for re-reading when the series is complete.

We also reproduce one of the earlier writings of the late Mr. W. J. Hocking, which appeared in *The Bible Treasury* for July, 1892. The theme—the incomparable love of God—inexhaustible indeed!—is one that can never fail to afford sweetness and comfort to the believer.

Thus, as the 'householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old' (Matthew xiii. 52), we hope (D.V.) to continue to offer our readers during 1965 food and refreshment for their new life in Christ. For our part, may we seek your prayers for the Lord's guidance and blessing upon this ministry. In doing this we echo the desire of the apostle John when writing to his well beloved Gaius:

'Beloved, I desire that in all things thou shouldst prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers' (III John 2, New Tr.).

THE ABIDING PRESENCE

'Lo I am with you all the days, even unto the full end of the age'
(Matthew xxviii. 20)

THE PROMISE CLOSES the Gospel by Matthew. It is the voice of Jesus in resurrection. There is a beautiful emphasis in the words. They are an overflow of assurance which is lasting in its comfort and reviving in its strength. 'I am with you ALL the days.' There is no day in your human calendar that I am not with you. In days when it seems others have forgotten you—dark days, known only to yourself—in days of difficulty, days of testing and waiting, then, indeed, I am with you. The outstretched hand of faith shall feel an answering clasp. 'All the days'—for who is safe from the snare of the Foe? Who among those who love Him could fail to be uplifted by His unconditional promise of the abiding Presence!

Then, too, the thought of overflow continues in the expression 'unto the FULL end of the age'. The word 'aion' is used (it is not 'kosmos'—'world'). It is the dispensation, or age, when He is not visible to them. As a glorified Man He is ascended to the Father, but, through the indwelling Spirit, He is with His own until the completion of this age of waiting—for at the close of this dispensation of grace **THEY WILL BE WITH HIM.**

The same assuring expression is recorded by John (chapter xiv. verse 18). How He read their thoughts! They feared to be left without Him—unprovided for, as orphans of their day. 'I will not leave you comfortless (orphans): I will come to you.' It is not the thought of a *general* coming—as to a company. It is a personal coming to each of His loved ones by the indwelling Presence, ever bringing to mind His words—ever seeking to reveal His character—to display His beauty. There can be no question as to the truth of this. It is of the divine Mind, for God was ever more ready to presence with man than man was to accord with the unchanging character of God.

From man's earliest days the evidence of this truth is clear. In Genesis ii. 19, 'the LORD GOD brought the beasts of the field and fowls of the air unto Adam to see what he would call them . . . and that was the name thereof.' The grace of this act

of intimate friendship is amazing. It is as though a Friend seeks to show to another the wonder of His creator character, and so to lift him up into a communion with Himself for the joy of both.

Notwithstanding Adam's failure God presenced with Abel. Who, save He, could have made known the means of acceptable approach to Himself by that symbol which Abel brought! Only that One could have shown him the need for the death of the firstlings of his flock, or nerved the hand of the first man to shed the blood of an animal as substitute sacrifice for himself.

The abiding Presence walked with Enoch, whose faith glowed like a beacon in his dark world. The steps of that pathway of grace led away from death. In company with that Presence Enoch learned victory over death as he walked onward into the Eternal Presence. Methuselah, his son, knew the divine companionship. As his long years passed he became ever more aware of the patient grace of the One who presenced with Him. How could it be otherwise? For the indwelling One reveals the marvels of His purpose as well as the wonders of His character. So Methuselah learned the waiting and longsuffering of God. The vessel of safety was in building, yet still he stayed on in life. His very name, it is said, conveyed the warning, 'At his death it would come.' Noah continued his building—a workman under direction from the Source of mercy—and Methuselah remained, till the last of his nine hundred and sixty nine years was spent, and the delayed flood of judgment overwhelmed a heedless and sinful world.

Noah, upright in his generation, walked with God (Genesis vi.). Like those men of faith before him, he knew the abiding Presence—even in a corrupt world. He learned, experimentally, the waiting mercy as well as the door of safety. In 'all the days' of the past there is a continuous unchanging presentation of the desire of God to bless man with His presence. Looking back over the fluctuating experiences of his life Jacob says, 'God which fed me ALL my life long unto this day.' Undeterred by the failure in Jacob's ways, the unfailing Presence remained—in sustaining as in correcting, in shielding as in chastening—

until, at the end of all *his* days Jacob has no thought of himself other than as one who has known the abiding Presence by reason of His mercy.

The depth of realisation and submission in view of the abiding Presence has varied in the men of the days of the past. Yet 'all the days' God was more available to each one than they were aware. There was a man in a most evil day, when the prophets of Baal—'the possessor'—had displaced the servants of Jehovah. He was a countryman—a man of the hills—yet he knew the power of the abiding Presence. The outcome of his consideration of the interests of God brought him more and more under the divine influence. This is always an inevitable consequence. The indwelling Spirit is productive in divine things—His functions operate in the interests of God. So much had these interests become his obsession that his very name proclaimed them: Elijah, 'God supreme.' So did David sing of Him, 'Extol Him that rideth upon the heavens, by His name Jah' (Psalm lxxviii.). Eli-Jah—God supreme, despite the spreading influence of Baal under royal patronage of Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal ('Baal's man'). It is in that Name that he confronts Ahab whilst being conscious of the abiding presence of God. 'As the LORD God of Israel liveth, *before* whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years.' He proclaims again the divine warning of Deuteronomy xi., 'The LORD shall shut up the heavens.' It was the outcome of departure from Himself, the very Source of Life.

There is a very beautiful expression of the abiding presence of God in the record in Judges vi. The purpose of this abiding was to bring divine strength out of utter weakness. There is a solitary oak, and a tiny hamlet (for this is the meaning of the word Ophrah) and a man furtively threshing wheat under shelter of a winepress, hoping to remain undiscovered by marauding Midianites. Yet, into this depressing scene, an angel of Jehovah comes. It is not a brief visitation and departure. It speaks of an abiding. He *sits* under the oak. As Gideon straightens his back from the threshingfloor, the Presence is made

known to him, and the word that he hears is not a salutation but a DECLARATION. 'Jehovah is *with* thee, thou mighty man of valour.' That Gideon had been concerned for the things of God is evident from the overflow of his thought into the flood of his words. The miracle of *awareness* of the presence of God, as a reality, occurs when this is so. It is sufficient answer to his anxiety, and his questions, that the assurance of the abiding Presence is repeated. In being reminded of his name the 'Great Warrior' is called to live in accord with it. 'Beloved, NOW are we the sons (children) of God' (I John iii. 2). 'What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!' The assurance given to Gideon is the same as that given to us in our day, 'Greater is He that is *in you* than he that is in the world' To have this birth-right is to be responsible to live in the power of it—as well as the comfort of it. Faith may reach out to this divine declaration, as Gideon did, and find it ever true. 'Surely I WILL be WITH THEE' (Judges vi. 16). The man with the warrior's name took up the warrior's weapons, and 'Midian lifted up their heads no more' (Judges viii.).

There were so many of them—men and women—who, in the past, experienced the active energy of the abiding Presence. David's petition was that it might never be taken from him. He so often called to mind the reality of it in his hazardous life. As a shepherd he knew the moving menace of the shadow as he led his flock through the valley. Surely the Abiding Presence comforted him when he recorded for Him the memories of those early days, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art WITH ME.'

Paul felt the cold threat of this grim shadow many times. He writes to Timothy of his trial before Nero—that inhuman despot who dealt in death. The shadow was dark then, indeed, but the Presence was so intensely real and personal to him that he could write, 'The Lord stood WITH me and strengthened me'—when no other stood with him and all forsook him!

The full days of His service, when Jesus was here with men, were made to overflow whenever He sensed a need for His abiding presence. There were cases, such as that of the cen-

turion, where the individual felt unworthy. Luke tells of another such an one. He was a man in a wrong place. He lived in Jericho, and was chief among the tax officials of that district assigned to him by the Roman authority. His chosen occupation had brought him riches. Yet he could trace his lineage from Abraham, and his name, itself, means 'Pure'! He had to find his friends from hated Roman overlords. He had fallen into a class apart, and his vocation was named in the same breath with that of sinners. He would be aware of the approach of Jesus through his district. He would have heard, too, of the gibes of the scornful—'This man receiveth sinners!—and eateth with them!' One thinks of him as he told himself that Jesus would never come to eat with *him*. At least, however, he could try to *see* Jesus—which one He was, amid the crowd. Poor, alike in stature as in friends, he hurries to reach his vantage point. From the tree height he looks down to behold the upturned face and hears his name as though a friend had paused to claim his company. He had hasted thither—he hastes to 'come down,' for 'TODAY' there is to be the Abiding Presence *in his house!*

To be *aware* of the abiding Presence, in subject humility, is to experience a change of motive—a re-direction of thought—which has no source in mere human impulse. There is a sense of possession. It is presented in the thought of 'abiding.' It is the word 'meno'—to remain, and, in that sense alone, salvation has come to the house of Zaccheus. He becomes a true son of Abraham—of the lineage of faith and with the character of the GIVER. His goods flow out to the poor of the flock. For Abraham always GAVE. He gave the choice of the land to Lot; he gave him rescue from enemies and recovery of his goods; he gave tithes to the Prince of Peace—intercession for the life of Lot. Abraham was a GIVER indeed—he gave his only son!

Have we an uninterrupted awareness of the abiding Presence—so that our inward selves are influenced by His character? There is such hollowness in the theoretical claim to be led by the Spirit. This is but a passing glimpse of Jesus—which men reserve for special days. '*Abide in Me, and I in you*'—the word

'meno,' to *remain*, is used again. The two followers—disciples of John the Baptist—pleaded, 'Where dwellest Thou?' Where may we find you? The answer, today, is still, 'Come and see.' Their object was not a passing visit—a mere religious observance—for part of a day. 'They abode with Him'—for the remaining two hours till sunset—they 'remained'—the word is, again, the same.

So, from the commencement of His abiding with men, until the resurrection days before His visible presence left them, the emphasis of His available nearness is clear. Toward the end of his Gospel, Luke shows us the two disciples who are going home. They share their sorrow as best they may, but their human reasoning cannot dispel despondency. They are without the Abiding Presence. They were the 'thoughtless ones'—for this is the meaning of the word He used for them. Their reasoning together superimposed their own wishes upon the divine design for 'the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.' Our own reasoning is always vulnerable—there is no substitute for the divine mind, 'the mind of Christ.' To substitute our own thoughts is to be without His thoughts, and thus to be 'thoughtless' indeed. With their backs toward those gathered in Jerusalem, they journey sorrowfully homeward in the fading day—'the third day' which to them should have heralded the resurrection triumph of the One they loved.

It was their sorrow drew the Presence to them. He companied with them, suiting His steps to their weary pace, and listening while they told Him what a stranger would need to know! So does He company with us at times. It is true that He ever abides—that He is with us 'all the days'—yet so often we must be reminded of His presence. It is then that 'the things concerning Himself' awake the plea for His abiding. We may well echo their prayer: 'Abide with us'—*remain* (for the word 'meno' is used again). His response is the same for us as for them, 'He went in to tarry (meno—to remain) with them.'

As He breaks the bread with thanksgiving, and is known to them, they would surely know the reality of His abiding presence in 'all the days' remaining of their life journey.

In 'all the days'—the present days of departure and a world of unbelief, while the love of the many grows cold and formalism substitutes itself for reality in the things of God, Jesus remains ever true to His promise. For us it is to hear His voice in resurrection as they heard it long ago—the ever present promise as day follows day while we await His coming in Person for us—'Lo, I am with you ALL THE DAYS even unto the full end of the age.'

Through 'all the days'—while days there be
 And we are journeying, Lord, to Thee,
 Be it our joy, our strength, to know
 Thy presence with us, as we go.

In every hour—while hours remain
 Of joy or sorrow—loss or gain,
 Speak to our hearts, lest aught betrays,
 'Lo, I am with you—ALL the days.'

EDWARD T. WOOD

THE BOOK OF JOB

(Continued)

IN CHAPTER XXI. of the book, Job answers the second, and last, speech of Zophar. 'But Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations' (verses 1-2), as much as to say, 'You came to comfort me, but have only wounded me by your insinuations and accusations; now your best way to console me is to give diligent heed to what I have to say.'

Verse 3: 'Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on.' Job had little hope now that his friends could give him any true comfort and help. Verses 4-5: 'As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? (or, As to myself, is my complaint to a man? and why then should not my spirit be impatient?). Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth.' Job feared God, and the troubles that came to him did not destroy his faith, but cast him the more upon God for the explanation

and for deliverance from them; he could not but be impatient that no one could help him; let his friends be silent at the enigma of an upright man being so stricken.

Verse 6: 'Even when I remember (or, when I think thereon) I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.' Job is thinking of the disasters which came upon him one after another in chapter i., and the terrible bodily affliction which suddenly struck himself in chapter ii.; he may well have feared and trembled at the remembrance, although still trusting in God.

It may also be that Job's distress arises from thinking of the end of the wicked; whether allowed to live long and to flourish outwardly, or dogged by misfortune and misery, all the unrepentant wicked are reserved for the wrath and judgment of God.

In the following verses he refutes the arguments of Zophar and his friends, that sudden troubles come from God upon a man because he is wicked. Zophar had said, 'The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment' (chapter xx., verse 5). On the contrary, very often evil men are allowed to live long and in outward prosperity.

Job therefore says, verses 7-13, 'Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance (or, frisk—C. P. Carey). They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.' That is, they have a long prosperous life and a quick peaceful end.

Verses 14-15: 'Therefore they say (or, And they say) unto God, Depart from us . . . What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? . . .' We may take this to be, not what they said in so many words, but how their conduct spoke before God. Christians do well to remember that God hears the language of

our conduct as well as the words of our prayers.

Verses 17 and 18 are put interrogatively in both the New Translation and the Revised Version. Put thus, Job is questioning the statements of his friends that the wicked are recompensed speedily in this life for their evil. 'How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, and cometh their calamity upon them? Doth He distribute arrows to them in His anger? Do they become as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away?' Then Job says in verse 19 that it is the children of the wicked man who are punished for his evil. 'God layeth up his iniquity for his children.' This agrees with Exodus xx. 5, 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.'

Some of the remaining verses of this chapter xxi. are not easy to understand, but the general sense is clear. Job is very grieved at his friends' arguments that his troubles are all due to sins that he is covering up, but which God sees and is recompensing in the afflictions which have suddenly befallen him. The last verse, 34, may be read (New Translation) 'How then comfort ye me in vain? Your answers remain perfidious.'

Job's answer to the third speech of Eliphaz is given in chapters xxiii. and xxiv. He seems to ignore completely the reproaches of his friends, and speaks in a moving way of his soul's desires toward God. He fears God, and trusts in Him, and yet can find no explanation of his troubles, and no answer to his prayers.

Chapter xxiii., verses 1-4, 8, 10-13, 15: 'Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments . . . Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him . . . But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He

is in one mind, and who can turn Him? . . . Therefore am I troubled at His presence: when I consider, I am afraid of Him.'

We do well to note and to seek to emulate Job's deep piety, his trust in God, the way he looked steadfastly to Him when in exceptional suffering and trial of body and spirit. It is another thing when Job labours to justify himself, and rests in his self-righteousness, and even puts blame on God. Here there is no excuse for us who live in the full light of the New Testament, and whatever our circumstances we must hold fast to the truth that God revealed in Christ is perfect light and perfect love, and has prepared perfect blessing for His own for eternity.

In reading chapter xxiv., we remember that Job's friends all maintained that in man's present earthly life, God shows His righteousness in bestowing earthly blessing on those who fear Him, and in visiting judgment in this life on the wicked; they therefore condemned Job on account of his tribulations. Job knew that they were wrong; for otherwise he who was not a hypocrite would not be suffering.

In verse 1, therefore, he asks, 'Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know Him, not see His days?' (Notice that the word 'not' applies to 'see'). The New Translation and the Revised Version give it as two questions: 'Why are not times laid (or treasured) up with the Almighty? And why do not they that know Him see His days?' Surely the point here is that God allows evil to go on unchecked in this world.

Job then refers to various forms of wickedness. Verses 2 to 4 ('Some remove the landmarks' etc.) seem to refer to evil works in the fields and open spaces. Verse 3, second part, 'they take the widow's ox for a pledge' may, by taking the primary sense of the verb, be read, 'they cord the ox of the widow'—that is, prepare to steal it (C. P. Carey). Verses 5 to 8 are evils committed in the desert. Verses 9 to 11 seem to refer to the cruelty of kidnapping for slavery. Verses 12 onward describe different crimes in the city, except that verse 18, 'He is swift as the waters' may refer to piracy. The verse has been translated, 'That other is swift on the face of the waters; the portion of those on the land

is despised; he turneth not to the way of orchards'; the pirate of course leaves honest toil on land to follow crime at sea. Verse 22: 'He, or Another, draweth the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life,' may describe the dictator with despotic power over his fellows.

All these evil men have their day. God 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust' (Matthew v. 45). At length they are removed by death as the rest of men, 'they are taken out of the way as all other' (verse 24). Hence it is quite erroneous to approve of those who prosper in this life, and condemn others who have troubles and trials. Job's final word, verse 25, is 'And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?'

Christians know that whatever may befall them in this life, their future blessing is assured in Christ. They rest on the Lord's words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment); but is passed from death unto life' (John v. 24.).

As to the world, God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead' (Acts xvii. 31).

(To be continued)

W. H. L. GRAHAM

THE INCOMPARABLE LOVE OF GOD

HUMAN LOVE OF whatever degree or kind yearns for and insists upon an object which it believes to be worthy of it. But it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of divine love that its object affords no originating impulse whatever. For 'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans v. 8). It is well to lay the thought of man's real condition much upon our hearts; since it were comparatively a small matter to point out that the ephemeral creature, man, was unable to show any excellence capable of exciting the love of One so far removed from him as his Almighty Creator. Indeed, reasoning from this thought

alone, some have falsely concluded that it is incredible, and even impossible, for God to entertain even the slightest regard for man upon earth. Nevertheless, the astonishing truth, exceeding all human conception, and revealed, not in nature but in scripture, is that, though man is in a desperate state of irreconcilable hatred and antagonism to everything divine, God loves him in spite of all.

Neither is this a matter of speculative theory, but an actual fact, bearing the highest credentials. God's love has been manifested. It is no longer a secret of the divine bosom; for its display was perfect and sufficient, being in and by the person of the Only-begotten Son of God, Who came tabernacling in flesh as the only competent exponent of that love. 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him' (I John iv. 9).

Moreover God has been pleased to allow His love to be tested and proved. And the proof He has given is that which ranks as most convincing in man's estimation. For the fullest possible attestation of one's love is to lay down one's life. No sacrifice can exceed this. 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life' (Job ii. 4). But Christ laid down His life, as He said, 'I lay down My life for the sheep' (John x. 15). Among men, however, it is barely conceivable that such an extreme sacrifice could be made for any but a friend or benefactor. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John xv. 13). 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans v. 7,8). Thus, blessed be His name, God has abounded above the thoughts as well as the sin and bitter enmity of His creatures, and bestowed His Son both as the propitiation for our sins and as the incomparable witness of His incomparable love. I John iv. 9, 10.

Have *you* ever known and believed that God is love? Is not the proof sufficient? God calls you to look at Christ and

Calvary, and not around you for the exhibition of His love. The world is full of the fruits of sin; yet physical pain, mental anguish, and universal sorrow do not deny the goodness of God but proclaim the evil of man. And though the Son of God came from heaven to stem the overflowing tide of woe, men still give credence to the devil's lie, rather than to God's truth that He is love. But let it not be forgotten that those who continue to resist this super-eminent love will assuredly add to the weight of their everlasting condemnation.

W. J. HOCKING

EXTRACTS

(see Exodus xiv. 13, 15)

Do you say, "Go forward" contradicts "stand still"? It may seem so to reason's blinded sight. But faith finds harmony, where grace gives light. We take no steps to expiate our sins, to pay our debts, to appease just wrath, or to procure redemption. While we "Stand still," Jesus does all. We are saved by grace, through faith (Ephesians ii. 8). It is the work of Jesus. It is the gift of God. But motion proves that we have life. Efforts evince, that we have strength. Works evidence, that we have faith. Fruit is the sign of healthy trees. Warmth is the token, that gratitude's bright flame glows warmly in the heart. Heaven is reached, not by toil, but in toil. Blessings descend, not for deeds, but on deeds. Faith comes with empty hands. Christ fills it with salvation. The saved hand soon brings again the offerings of devoted love. Christ dies upon the altar of atonement. Our lives ascend, as incense to His praise. None go so surely forward to the throne, as they, who stand still at the saving cross.

* * *

Yes, the Lord will surely save His people with an everlasting salvation. No peril shall impede their triumph. No foe shall hinder. Trials and snares, afflictions and temptations shall make way. The grave shall not detain. Death shall yield up its prey. The true Israel shall reach the land of never-fading joy. With palms in their hands, and crowns on their heads, they shall ascribe, in ceaseless songs, all victory to the cross of Jesus.

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

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*Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1*

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

'THE HOUR'

'Father, the hour is come' (John xvii.1)

One hour there is in history's page

Pre-eminent o'er all the past;

'Twill shine and shine from age to age,

While earth, while heaven itself, shall last.

O'ercome by time's oblivious power,

While earthly glories all decay,

The memory of that blessed hour

Shall never, never pass away.

A watch-fire on a lofty hill,

Conspicuous o'er the waste of years,

That friendly beacon, blazing still,

The weary, wayworn pilgrim cheers.

Thou'lt say, What deed of glory gave

Such lustre to that single hour?

Go, ask the earth, the sun, the grave—

These all confessed its thrilling power.

Aye, wrapped at noon in deepest night,

The trembling earth it shook with dread,

The sun at mid-day lost its light,

The opening grave gave up its dead.

Child of the world, 'tis not for thee

To feel its heart-consoling power;

Dead — dead to God — thine eyes can see

No glory in that wondrous hour.

Christian, 'tis thine alone to know

And prize it more than all beside;

So bright with love, so dark with woe —

That gracious hour when Jesus died.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AS A SYMBOL OF FELLOWSHIP

(1 Corinthians x. 14-17)

NEVER IN THE scriptures do we find a believer taking the Lord's supper alone. Neither it is ever 'administered' to others by priest or minister. And though one person must give thanks for the bread and the cup, it is as representing the company, so that the apostle says 'the cup of blessing which *we* bless, the bread which *we* break.'

In the portion of scripture referred to, Paul speaks of the Supper as a 'communion' or fellowship, in contrast with the fellowship with demons which was implied by eating things sacrificed to idols. The Corinthian believers had evidently asked Paul a question about this which provided the occasion for his remarks, but his words are worthy of study in themselves, though the question of idol-worship may not now trouble us.

'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?'

Communion or fellowship, implies that those concerned have something which they share—some common possession or interest. Thus as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are all marked by this, that we trust in the value of the blood of Christ for salvation and cleansing. This is fundamental to Christianity: perhaps it is for this reason that the cup is mentioned first.

We may be, and indeed are, different from one another in many ways—in race and colour, in class or occupation, in education and in outlook—all of which tend to keep us separate; but this reliance on the blood of our Saviour we all have in common.

The drinking of the cup is indeed in remembrance of the death of the Lord, but it is only as those who have learned what it means to trust in His blood that we desire to remember Him. Likewise with the breaking of the bread, it is the communion of

the body of Christ—the expression of our common desire to recall His offering Himself up for us.

It is noteworthy that the apostle uses language which implies that all of those to whom it is addressed are themselves doing the same thing. But he does not say, ‘The cup which *ye* bless,’ as though the Corinthians were to think of themselves only as doing this; no, his words show that he is speaking of all believers.

He continues, ‘For we being many are one bread (or loaf), one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (or loaf).’ In this we are taken a step further: this communion, this sharing together in this remembrance, is a symbol of the fact that we are indeed one—one body in Christ.

This is the earliest occasion on which we meet this expression ‘one body’ in Paul’s epistles, though the equivalent is found in chapter vi. 15. The subject, as is well known, is enlarged in chapter xii., and is still more developed in Ephesians and Colossians.

Now in chapter xii. (verse 13) we find that all believers are united together by the Holy Spirit who indwells each one. The work of the Spirit is always to glorify Christ, so that one fruit of His presence is in leading the saints, in obedience to the Lord’s own word, to partake of that one loaf. We do it together because we are one in Christ, and the one loaf becomes the symbol of our unity.

There is thus a transition in Paul’s words from the literal, physical body of the Lord, to the mystical body into which we are united. We find a similar connecting link between the two thoughts in the type of Adam, through whose ‘deep sleep’ a rib was taken from him to be formed into his bride, Eve. For the Church, the body of Christ and also to be His bride when the day of glory dawns, owes her whole being to the sleep of death into which He entered for her sake.

Hence, when as lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ we gather to remember Him in His death, we are not alone in so doing, but we do it in common with all that love Him and desire to please Him. Meeting at different times and in many places, our thoughts are yet occupied with the same blessed Saviour, and

we have fellowship together by virtue of this: we do it as members of that one body.

There are two errors which we have to guard against here. First there is what we may call the sacramental error, which is that our own partaking of the loaf and the cup itself *gives* us a share in the body and blood of Christ. This error, alas, is found in the New English Bible, which instead of 'communion' reads 'a means of sharing in the blood of Christ etc.' But it is not 'a means of sharing', but a symbol of the sharing itself. All scripture tells us that *faith* is the *means* by which we share in the blood of Christ.

The second error concerns the unity. We may with advantage recall the apostle's insistence in Ephesians iv. that there is *one* body. For some treat this passage in I Corinthians x. as though the unity we have been speaking of consists of those who actually break bread together, as if this formed the unity, whereas it is really the expression of a oneness already existing—a oneness which takes in all believers. When Paul says, 'We are all partakers of that one bread,' he cannot mean one actual loaf. His words remind us rather of the Passover lamb: 'The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.' There was but one lamb, and there is but one loaf. There is but one body, and our unity must be that or nothing. Had the individual company been in the apostle's mind, he must have said, 'For ye being many are one loaf, one body, for ye are all partakers of that one loaf.'

Now every fellowship is in some degree exclusive, and this is particularly so in the case of the Lord's supper. It was for this reason indeed that Paul introduced the subject into his epistle. In his day he had to stress the fact that this fellowship was incompatible with idol-worship. 'Ye cannot,' he says, 'drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils.' But we can see that it also excludes all who do not love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. What does the communion of the blood of Christ mean to a man still in his sins? What communion hath light with darkness? (2 Cor. vi. 14).

When we come together to remember the One who went into death for us, by the same token we come apart from the world

which has no place for Him. But this is not only true when we come together. We who believe belong to a fellowship which separates us completely, in spirit, from the world. Not that we are not to mix with the world, for the Lord has sent us into it to be His witnesses; but if we are true to Him it will not love us—it can at best tolerate us, and we cannot love it, nor its things (1 John ii. 15). But every true Christian owes to it his Lord and Saviour to come apart from the world, on the first day of the week as did the early believers (Acts xx. 7, ii. 42) gathering with those that love Him to remember Him in His death.

There is another question which we must also consider. Are we that share in this communion behaving worthily of it? Are we true to that Holy Name? What a serious matter it is if unholiness prevails among those who are in such a holy fellowship! It is not a question of whether *we* are worthy, for that we can never be. Our very presence at His Supper is a confession that in ourselves we are but lost sinners. However, we do need to judge our ways in the light of His word, and to confess our sins that we may receive His forgiveness. This is dealt with more fully in chapter xi. 27-31.

Furthermore the scripture provides for the case where gross sin occurs and is not judged, and shows that then the assembly becomes responsible to judge the person concerned. They must expel him from their company, else they become defiled by what amounts to acquiescence in his sin (1 Corinthians v.). But let us note that this expulsion is not mere exclusion from the Lord's Supper. For that indeed is a symbol of fellowship, but it is not the whole of fellowship. But if an assembly should refuse to judge the evil, fellowship with it would then become fellowship with evil.

On the other hand, to refuse the Lord's Supper to those with whom we are free to enjoy other forms of Christian fellowship is to act in a formal, legal manner, unworthy of those concerned with spiritual realities.

One other practical question concerns the form of the supper itself. The symbol of the one body is surely destroyed by the practice of using a loaf already cut up, and still more by individual wafers. It is not quite the same with the cup, because a

liquid is not united in its parts as a solid is, and a small number of cups, where the number partaking is large, may be not inconsistent with the meaning. On the other hand, to provide a cup for each individual believer is not only unnecessary, but shows disrespect to what the Lord Himself ordained. On the whole, the nearer we can keep to the *essentials* of the Supper, the better.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE BOOK OF JOB

IX.

THE LONG FINAL speech of Job occupies the six chapters xxvi.-xxxi. It seems that in chapter xxvi. Job answers Bildad's short third discourse of chapter xxv., and then, perhaps after a pause for Zophar's third speech which never came, there is in chapters xxvii. and xxviii. a general answer to the three friends, and in chapters xxix. to xxxi. a long lament and complaint concluding with a justification of himself and an appeal for an answer.

Chapter xxvi., verses 1-3: 'But Job answered and said, How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?' These sentences are best read with exclamation marks (as in the Revised Version etc.), and not as questions, for Job is clearly sarcastic. Bildad had spoken, in five verses only, of God's greatness and the impossibility of man being just with Him. It was not a copious answer, not was it a helpful one. Job continues, verse 4, 'To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?' That is, Who is so fortunate as to be addressed by you, and by what remarkable inspiration!

But Bildad had spoken of God's greatness. Job will take up this wonderful theme, in the knowledge of which he far surpassed his friends. He speaks of God's power in the underworld, in heaven, and earth, and sea. Verse 5: 'Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof,' is better rendered, The shades of the dead tremble (that is, before

God), the places beneath the waters, and they that dwell there. The word in verse 6 for 'destruction' is *abaddon*, which is used in Revelation ix. 11, 'the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon*, but in the Greek tongue hath his name *Apollyon*' (meaning Destroyer). Verse 10: 'He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end,' reads in the New Translation, 'He hath traced a fixed circle over the waters, unto the confines of light and darkness.'

In verse 12, 'He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud,' the word 'divideth' can read 'stilleth,' and the word for proud is *Rahab*, which is used as a name for Egypt (Isaiah li. 9), and means tumult; the verse may therefore be read, 'He stilleth the sea with His power, and by His knowledge treads down its tumult.' Verse 13: 'His hand hath formed (or wounded) the crooked (or fleeing) serpent,' appears to refer to the constellation of stars named *The Serpent*, which gliding as it were through space is kept moving round its axis as if wounded and unable to escape. It is said that the fables of the Greeks etc. respecting the constellation evidently have their origin in the inspired account of the serpent's evil and curse in Genesis iii. The concluding verse 14 reads in the Revised Version, 'Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?' We ought not in our worship to lack a sense of the wonder of the infinite greatness of God.

Perhaps after chapter xxvi., Job paused for Zophar to reply, and in the absence of a third speech from that friend, we read in chapter xxvii., 'Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, as God liveth, Who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, Who hath vexed my soul: all the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.'

Here Job makes his final protestation that he was righteous,

and that the accusations of his friends were false. In the remaining verses of the chapter, Job shows how well he knew that hypocrites and wicked men must eventually fall under God's judgment. He was not deceived by appearances, whatever his friends said about him, and he maintained his fear of God. Is there not a need today to feel for our fellow-men, and to pray for them, that they may learn to acknowledge God, and repent of their evil ways, and believe the Gospel to the saving of their souls from judgment?

The well-known chapter xxviii. commences, 'Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it (or, which they refine). Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass (copper) is molten out of the stone. He (man) setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.' Verse 4: 'The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant,' should read, 'He openeth a shaft far from where men sojourn.' Job is speaking of man's skill in finding precious metals in the earth by mining processes. Verses 7 and 8: 'There is a path which no fowl (bird of prey) knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it,' refer to the underground tunnels of mine workings.

What is the bearing of all this? Surely it is, that man even in those early days had searched and found many of the treasures hid in the earth, but there is a greater treasure still which man deeply needs, that is, true wisdom and knowledge. Hence we read in verse 12, 'But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?' Men use their industry and intelligence to obtain many luxuries and pleasures, but remain still under the power of their fallen sinful natures, foolish as to true spiritual wealth, and ignorant of what is really life.

In the latter part of the chapter, Job finds the answer in God. Verse 23: 'God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof.' Verse 28: 'And unto man He said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' In this day of the Gospel, God has revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ, and has provided a salvation

from sin and judgment through the Cross. So we read in 1 Corinthians i. 30, 'But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' What a deliverance and blessing this is!

In chapter xxix. Job goes back to the days before Satan smote him. Greatly blessed by God, he was respected and honoured by men, and was full of good works. Tabitha (Dorcas) 'was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did,' (Acts ix.), and so should we be today. Job cared for the poor and the fatherless. 'I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy . . . I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out' (verses 13-16). At the same time his self-complacency shows itself again. 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem . . . my glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand' (verses 14, 20). We know that no flesh shall glory in God's presence, but he that glorieth is to glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians i.).

In chapter xxx. Job contrasts the days of prosperity before he was smitten, with the terrible state into which he has been brought. 'But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock . . . and now I am their song, yea I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face . . . Thou art become cruel to me: with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me . . . My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ (pipe) into the voice of them that weep.' Job was truly brought very low indeed, but it was all ordered by God for his blessing. Peter was led to write for Christians: 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you' (1 Peter v. 6, 7).

We now come to chapter xxxi., which ends Job's final speech. Some regard it as his last appeal to God, but he does not directly address God in the chapter, and we may view it rather as his concluding claim, made before God and man, to his own innocence and righteousness. There is no reason to doubt that

what he says of himself is truth throughout, and we see how high was the standard of his daily life. His fault in fact was self-satisfaction, and, as shown elsewhere (see for instance chapters xiii., xvi., xix., xxiii.) his dissatisfaction with God, and he is not put right until he gets into God's presence and there sees himself as God sees him.

We may divide chapter xxxi. as follows. He claims to be free from seven faults; immorality in verses 1-12; selfish disregard of others in verses 13-23 and 31-32; the desire for and pleasure in riches in verses 24-25; idolatry (even in secret) in verses 26-28; bitter feeling for those who made themselves his enemies in verses 29-30; insincerity in verses 33-34; and even misuse of his land in verses 38-39. There is also in verses 35-37 a challenge that any other charges against him should be specified, so that he could clear himself.

Verse 21: 'If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate,' has been translated (C. P. Carey) 'If I have shaken my hand at the fatherless, when I saw I had support in the gate.' The gate in early days corresponds with the law courts of later times (Genesis xxiii.; Ruth iv.), and here it seems we are to understand that Job would not corruptly join with others in judgment against a defenceless accused person. Verse 23: 'by reason of His highness I could not endure,' seems to mean that Job's sense of God's majesty kept him from wrongful acts. In verses 26-27, 'If I beheld the sun . . . or the moon . . . and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand,' the reference is to the earliest forms of idolatry, that is the worship of the sun and moon.

Verse 31, 'If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied,' should read, 'If the men of my tent said not, Who shall find one that hath not been satisfied with his meat?' (New Translation). Verse 33: 'If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom,' is taken to refer to Genesis iii. 8, where Adam and Eve in Eden, having disobeyed God's command, hid themselves from God's presence. The Hebrew could however mean, not 'as Adam,' but 'after the manner of men.' Most evil men

aim to cover up their misdeeds for shame or to avoid the consequences. With verse 33 we should connect verse 34 and read straight on, as in the New Translation, 'If I covered my transgressions as Adam (or, after the manner of men), by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom, because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and went not out of the door.'

Verses 35-37 I take to be a parenthesis in which Job appeals to all to point out where he is at fault, so that he can vindicate himself, as he is certain he could. The New Translation reads, 'Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold my signature: let the Almighty answer me! And let mine opponent write an accusation! Would I not take it upon my shoulder? I would bind it to me as a crown; I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I come near to him.'

In verses 38 to 40 Job concludes his defence and self-justification—If in any of the ways of evil men, it can be proved that I have offended, then—let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockles (tares or weeds) instead of barley—let me starve to death and not live. The words of Job are ended.

How different is the Christian's standing. Romans iv. 5: 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;' and this is only possible through our Lord Jesus Christ, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification' (Romans iv. 25).

W. H. L. GRAHAM

(To be continued)

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE

THERE IS A disposition at times to belittle the writings of the apostle Paul on the alleged ground that his teaching is superseded by that of the then surviving apostle John, who lived some thirty years beyond. It was bad enough when some at Corinth said, 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephass,' but this is infinitely worse; for in their writings, which we have, they were divinely and equally inspired, and preference is therefore

out of place. The Lord Jesus specially prayed for the apostles. 'Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name' (John xvii. 11, 12). And further on, He adds, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word' (verse 20.) '*Their word*' then should be of all importance to all those who have, through grace, been given to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ through their testimony—whether that testimony be of an apostle appointed by the Lord when on earth (Luke vi. 13), or of an apostle commissioned from on high 'by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead' (Galatians i. 1).

Now we find in 1 Corinthians xiv. 37 the apostle Paul thus writes: 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.' And remark here that it is not what 'we', but what 'I' write, and further, it is written, 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever' (1 Peter i. 25).

Let us now turn to the apostle John, and hear what he has to say. '*We* are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth *us*; he that is not of God heareth not *us*. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error' (1 John iv. 6). We may note the use here of the plural pronoun, in contrast with the singular as in the case of St. Paul, so that his testimony goes along with, and not apart from, any of the others.

Come we now to the apostle of the circumcision, and listen to St. Peter, when writing his Second Epistle. 'This now a second epistle, beloved, I am writing to you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of *us*, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour' (iii. 1, 2). Then, as if the Scripture foresaw the slight in these last times to be put upon St. Paul, he adds, in the same chapter, 'And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you—as also in all (not, some only) his epistles, speaking in them

of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other Scriptures*, unto their own destruction' (verses 15, 16). We thus see how that Peter, at any rate, gives to the writings of Paul the same reverence as he did to the 'other Scriptures.'

Jude, too, exhorts in his epistle, brief but all-important as it is, 'But ye, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ' (verse 17). Not one only, nor some, but all. In Ephesians ii. we are told that we are built upon the foundation of 'the apostles and prophets,' Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone (verse 20). This brings in the writings not only of apostles, but of prophets (i.e. of the New Testament, compare Acts xiii. 1), such as, for instance, Mark and Luke of the Evangelists, who, though not apostles, were nevertheless 'prophets,' whilst Matthew and John were 'apostles.' Yet are the truths of Mark and Luke equally binding on us as those of Matthew and John.

Paul, in view of his departure, and of the entrance of 'grievous wolves,' who would come in not sparing the flock, warned the Ephesian elders thus: 'And now I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified' (Acts xx. 32). How blessed to be thus commended to what always abides! We have no sufficiency in ourselves, and we need both God and His word, and this is vouchsafed. He is the eternal 'I am,' and the word of our God shall stand 'for ever' (Isaiah xl. 8).

So also Peter, equally solicitous for the saints in the prospect of the putting off of this 'my tabernacle,' desires that what he writes should be had in remembrance. 'I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance' (2 Peter i. 12-15). How truly we need his writings even as those of John and Paul!

We may therefore, finally, thank God that 'all (or every) scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished*

unto every good work' (2 Timothy iii. 16, 17). If we are obedient to but a *part* of Scripture we cannot be thus perfected. But may we heed the words of Agar, 'Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar' (Proverbs xxx. 5, 6).

W. N. TOMKINS

(Reprinted from *The Bible Treasury*, March 1908)

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

(John i.14)

Wherefore is this wonder of wonders? Wherefore is eternity's Lord a child of time? He thus stoops, that He may save poor wretched sinners, such as we are. Could He not do so by His will or by His word? Ah! no. He willed, and all things were. He speaks, and all obey. But He must die, as man, that a lost soul may live. To rescue from one stain of sin, the Eternal must take the sinner's place — and bear sin's curse — and pay sin's debt — and suffer sin's penalty — and wash out sin's filth — and atone for sin's malignity. 'I am that I am' alone could do this. 'I am that I am' alone has done it.

What self-denial, what self-abasement, what self-emptying is here! Surely, royalty in rags, angels in cells, is no descent compared to Deity in flesh. But mighty love moves Jesus to despise all shame, and to lie low in misery's lowest mire. Through ages past His 'delights were with the sons of men' (Proverbs viii.31). Eternity to come is but a void, unless His people share His glory. Therefore, He humbles Himself to earth, that specks of earth may rise to heaven's immortality. Believer, you joy in prospect of thus living with Him for ever. But, wherefore, is there full rapture in the thought? Do you not feel, that the crowning ecstasy is in this? Eternity will afford you time to gaze with steady look on a Saviour's glories — to sing with unwearied hymn a Saviour's praise — to bless with perpetual blessing a Saviour's name— and to learn with ever expanding knowledge a Saviour's worth.

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

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PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PETTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher. C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

We begin this month a series of four articles on the Second Coming of Christ, which we are confident will make a special appeal to all our readers.

There can be no question as to the importance of this subject. Apostolic preaching resulted in converts turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God, "and to wait for His Son from heaven." This therefore is the characteristic hope of the Christian faith, and, as the writer of our article points out, Paul was inspired in his earliest epistle to see that there should be no misunderstanding as to the matter.

Mr. Wood's first article is designed to strengthen the believer's confidence by reminding him of the many past fulfilments of prophecy in connection with the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. The testimony is overwhelming that every word spoken by God will surely come to pass, and we may comfort ourselves and one another with the assurance that He who said "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself" will certainly do so. To Him who proclaims himself to be the bright and morning star, the Spirit and the bride cry, spontaneously, COME! (Revelation xxii.17)

It is hoped, God willing, to reprint these papers as a separate pamphlet, and a further announcement will be made in due course. In the meantime, may this fresh reminder of the Lord's return have the effect upon all which the hymn-writer (Thos. Kelly) expressed as follows:—

Oh, kindle within us a holy desire,

Like that which was found in Thy people of old

Who tasted Thy love, and whose hearts were on fire,

While they waited in patience Thy face to behold.

"THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN."

THE BOOK OF JOB

XI

WE PROCEED with the speech of Elihu. In chapter xxxiii. he rebuked Job for maintaining that he himself was clean and innocent, and that God had been hostile to him without cause. Now in chapter xxxiv. Elihu takes up further sayings of Job to the effect that he himself was righteous, and that God had put aside his right, and that it was of no benefit for a man to delight in God.

Chapter xxxiv.1-6: "Furthermore Elihu answered and said, Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat (food). Let us choose to us judgment (or, Let us choose for ourselves what is right); let us know among ourselves what is good. For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment (or right). Should I lie against my right? My wound is incurable without transgression (or, as in the Revised Version, God hath taken away my right: notwithstanding my right I am accounted a liar: my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression)."

In speaking like this Job was showing himself scornful of "patient continuance in well doing" (Romans ii.), and this put him on the way to companying with evil-doers. So Elihu exclaims, verses 7-9: "What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God." We ourselves may be inclined to fail in a similar way, when for instance there is news of a great calamity such as floods, or severe drought, or earthquake, and we are tempted to question why God allows such disasters. Do not we need in this day to maintain the truth that man is a fallen creature, and that God is perfectly holy, wise and good? Romans iii.4 reads (New Translation): "Let God be true, and every man false; according as it is written, So that Thou shouldest be justified in Thy words, and shouldest overcome when Thou art in judgment."

Elihu's answer is that it is unthinkable that God should do wickedness or iniquity: He is in the place of absolute supremacy, and if He were merely to recall the life He has given, all flesh should perish and return to dust. Job's words were unsuited to address to kings or others in high places, how much less to Him Who has made all. Verse 12: "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." Verses 18-19: "Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked (or, Belial)? and to princes, Ye are ungodly (wicked)? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they are all the work of His hands."

Elihu then insists upon God's place as the moral Governor of men. God sees and takes note of all man's behaviour, and in His supreme power He brings down those who are exalted, and helps the poor and afflicted. Verse 21: "For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings." Verse 24: "He shall break in pieces mighty men without number (or, without enquiry), and set others in their stead." Verse 29: "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble (or disturb)? And when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him? Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only (or, and this towards a nation or towards a man alike)."

The chapter ends with Elihu blaming Job, but in a restrained way, and first putting the words into the mouths of others. Verses 34-37 read in the New Translation: "Men of understanding will say to me, and a wise man who heareth me, Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were not with intelligence. Would that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers after the manner of evil men! For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God." Clapping the hands may be taken as a sign of indignation, as when Balak was angry with Balaam for blessing his enemies it is said, "he smote his hands together" (Numbers xxiv.10).

In the short chapter xxxv., Elihu takes up further sayings of Job. "Elihu spake moreover, and said, Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than

God's? For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?" (or, For thou hast asked of what profit it is unto thee: what do I gain more than if I had sinned — New Translation).

Elihu then points out that in thinking and saying such things, Job was getting right out of his proper place of lowly subjection to the God Who is infinitely greater than man. Verse 15: "But now, because it is not so, He hath visited in His anger; yet he knoweth it not in great extremity," reads in the New Translation, "But now, because He hath not visited in His anger, doth not Job know his great arrogancy?" Elihu concludes, verse 16, "Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain (or, in vanity); he multiplieth words without knowledge."

Verse 10: "But none saith, Where is God my Maker, Who giveth songs in the night," is evidently referred to in a poem entitled "Echo of Songs in the Night," by J. N. Darby, which ends,

And oh! how deep the peace, when, nature gone,
Thy Spirit fills the soul strengthened with might —
With love divine; and God, as Love, is known!
Lord! keep my soul, and guide my steps aright.
Praise be for ever His who giveth songs by night.

In the remainder of his speech, chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii., Elihu dwells much upon God's greatness. We have such words as God is mighty, God is exalted in His power, God is great, God thundereth marvellously with His voice, consider the wondrous works of God, with God is terrible majesty. Unbelief would say that if God is so great and I am so small, it is impossible that He can be interested in me, and that I can know anything of Him. The fact is that God shows His might by taking interest in the smallest and weakest in His creation, the sparrows (Matthew x.29), the worm (Jonah iv.7) and the lilies (Matthew vi.30). The Christian knows that God is deeply interested in His creature man, and holds him morally responsible to Himself, and reveals Himself to him through His word, and so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, Who became a man to die for sinners.

In chapter xxxvi. Elihu is concerned with God's dealings with men, and especially with those who acknowledge and

trust in Him (such as Job himself). In chapter xxxvii. the greatness of God is emphasised with the object no doubt of bringing Job (and ourselves surely) to that lowly state of mind which leads to blessing.

Chapter xxxvi., verses 1-12: "Elihu also proceeded, and said, Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker . . . Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any . . . He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous . . . and if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then He sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded (or, because they have increased). He openeth also their ear to discipline (this was Job's need), and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey (or hearken) and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity . . . But if they obey (hearken) not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge."

Here I think we reach the great point of the lesson which Job needed. He was (through God's grace, we may say) an upright man who feared God and avoided evil. Heavy afflictions came suddenly upon him, and the result so far was to drive Job to cling the more to his own righteousness and to complain of God as allowing the undeserved suffering. Now, says Elihu, God has His eye upon you, Job, and is acting not in judgment but in discipline for your good, and you need to hear and to serve God, not blame Him. That is, Job must humble himself and turn from his self-righteousness.

Verses 15-18: "He (God) delivereth the poor (or afflicted) in his affliction, and openeth their ears in (their) oppression. Even so would He have removed thee out of the strait (or out of the jaws of distress) into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on (or the supply of) thy table should be full of fatness. But thou hast fulfilled (or art full of) the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee. Because there is wrath, beware lest He (or it) take thee away with His stroke (or through chastisement): then a great ransom cannot deliver thee (or could not avail thee)." Elihu here is both faithful and benevolent,

and it is a good sign that Job is remaining silent; no doubt he is beginning to see things in their true light.

Verses 20-21: "Desire not the night, when people are cut off in (or from) their place. Take heed, regard not (turn not to) iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction." Job had been overwhelmed by his afflictions, and desired death as seeming to be the only way of deliverance, but God had not granted his desire in order that Job might be set free from self-righteousness and learn to know the blessed God in a fuller way than ever before. So Elihu's desire is that Job should accept the affliction and find his true place before God. Verses 22-25: "Behold, God exalteth by (or is exalted in) His power: Who teacheth like Him? Who hath enjoined (or appointed) Him His way? Or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Remember that thou magnify His work, which men behold. Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off."

In verses 27-28, Elihu describes the formation of rain by evaporation and condensation. From chapter xxxvi.29 to chapter xxxvii.5, we have a thunderstorm, followed by a reference to snow and ice with their paralysing effect upon man and beast in verses 6-10. God's ordering of the clouds is then mentioned, and Job is to stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God, and to feel his own littleness. In conclusion, Elihu still has Job's good at heart, and says, "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty (abundance) of justice: He will not (doth not) afflict. Men do therefore fear Him: He respecteth not any that are wise of heart (that is, any that lean on their own intelligence)."

(To be continued)

W. H. L. GRAHAM

THE CERTAIN RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES of men vary in interest with the differing circumstances that have affected their lives. They write of success and of failure, of purposes achieved and plans that came to nought, of victories, of work well done. There are those who write less of themselves than of those other men whose lives have affected their own.

There was one who wrote never mentioning his own name, but *his* life had touched "that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us" (I John i.2). He had known God manifest in flesh, and he re-lives that short wonder-time of his life as he looks back — beyond the many years that have passed since he heard the beloved Voice, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv.3). The passage of time had not dimmed the reality of the promise. The Person who had made it was known too intimately for doubt to cloud the brightness of that hope.

Paul had already written to the Hebrews, with all the force of faith's conviction, "Now once in the consummation of the ages He has been manifest for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice" (Hebrews ix.26). "Christ also having been once offered to bear the sins of many shall appear to those that look for Him the second time without sin for salvation" (Hebrews ix.28). On that "once" and final occasion, outstanding in the sad history of men, Christ had represented them — in death! He now represents them **IN LIFE** — and He comes the second time to receive His own to Himself. Those who love Him look for Him, and, in looking, see divine perfection in this order of events.

In recalling the things of others, the one who called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" tells of Peter's pent up feelings escaping irrepressibly into words. The One he dearly loved had said, "Whither I go ye cannot come," and the thought of losing Him brought Peter's very soul into a rebellion against the incomprehensible course of events. "Lord, whither goest Thou?" (John xiii.36), and the quiet answer, sadly given — "Thou canst not follow Me now" — for He

was going to Calvary — “but thou shalt follow Me afterwards” — *to the Father's house!* The note of that “joy that was set before Him” pervades the promise!

So the certainty of the return of the Lord Jesus depends upon His own promise. Of the twenty-seven sections of the New Testament, twenty-two speak of His return. But His own are satisfied with His promise “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.”

The divine Voice of inspiration confirms and emphasises the promise. About the year A.D. 52 there gathered in Thessalonica an eager assembly of newly convinced believers in Christ to hear the reading of a letter from Paul written from Corinth. Jews were among those converts and a large number of Greeks and important women of that great commercial capital city. It was the earliest letter that Paul had written. There was encouragement as well as correction in it. His message swept away misunderstanding. There were those who had died. They had expected a Kingdom, new and perfect, in which Christ would reign. But He was coming first *for* His own. That was His promise. Then, when He comes to reign, they could be *with* Him. One can think of those, young in the faith, of so long ago, as the inspired words of Paul's letter are read in their midst — “The Lord HIMSELF *shall* descend from Heaven . . . the dead in Christ *shall* rise first; then we which are alive and remain *shall* be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so *shall* we be ever with the Lord” (I Thess.iv). The ancient prophecy of Enoch, that man who walked with God, shall be fulfilled, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints” (Jude 14).

These prophecies are promises “exceeding great and precious” (2 Peter i.4). Our hope is established upon them. Peter, writing to Jewish Christians, reminds them of the prophecies in the holy writings committed to them. “We have the prophetic word made firmer whereunto ye do well that ye take heed (as unto a light that shineth in a dark place UNTIL THE DAY DAWN and the DAY STAR arise) in your hearts” (2 Peter i.). To take heed in one's HEART is to be activated

by the sure awareness of the truth of the coming event. It is so different, in effect, from mere head knowledge!

Can we, in this our time, rely upon prophecy? Have the prophecies of the past been fulfilled? "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Peter iii.15). One hundred and nine predictions, possibly many more, were fulfilled at Christ's first coming. They could not have been coincidences nor could they have been invented by His followers. In fact, His *enemies* fulfilled a great many of them!

In the early part of his record Luke refers to the going forth of the decree of an heathen emperor. This decree of Caesar Augustus involved the enrolment of all inhabitants of Judea of which Herod the Great, of ill fame, had been appointed king, under Rome, about the year 40 B.C. A few years later, with the help of Rome, he had taken Jerusalem and generally established his position. Jealous of all, and murderer of many, this evil proselyte to Judaism asserted his limited authority by requiring that the enrolment should be tribal — each family was to journey to its ancestral city. Caesar Augustus, tolerating Herod's self-assertion; granted his request. It was thus that Joseph and his espoused wife Mary journeyed from Nazareth of Galilee unto Judea, to Bethlehem, the city of David. It was thus, also, that the prophecy of Micah was fulfilled—"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah (the fruitful), though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v.2). The accuracy of this prophecy is enhanced when we recall that there were two villages named Bethlehem — the other was in Zebulon (Joshua xix.).

Micah's prophecy was read to Herod when "there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews" (Matthew ii.). The rulers of the Jews omitted to read the last nine words of it, and Herod massacred the infants of Bethlehem, but who shall stay the "goings forth that have been from old, from everlasting"? As the outcome, two more prophecies were fulfilled. Matthew referred to them (Chap.ii.15), "Out of Egypt have I called

My Son," and (verse 18) "Rachel weeping for her children." The first world power to be actuated by Satanic hatred toward the Sent One of God had shown itself.

It is sad to think of the divine Spirit discerning the animosity of unbelief as a characteristic of men unborn. More than 700 years before Christ was born Isaiah foretold His rejection as Messiah. Israel is foreknown as a gardener casting away a plant unprofitable for further growth. "A tender (i.e. weak) Plant" — "a root out of a dry ground" (despised Nazareth). — (Isaiah liii.). Small wonder that the Candace's treasurer, returning from the worship of Jerusalem, sought from Philip the treasure of divine exposition which showed the despised One as Jesus, wounded for our transgressions. Who, among the world of men, would proclaim in advance the failure of his own project! Or who, from among the wisest of the human race, could scan seven centuries of time and see, with poignant clarity, the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow!

Nor was His rejection, alone, the subject of prophecy. Zechariah wrote of His betrayal in great detail more than five hundred years before it occurred, and at a time when the word of Darius Hystaspes, the Persian ruler, was law in the land. "They weighed for my price THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER . . . I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zechariah xi.12, 13). Matthew solemnly records the event: "They covenanted with him (Judas) for thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew xxvi.15), and in the next chapter of his record we read "he (Judas) cast down the pieces of silver in the temple . . . and the chief priests took the silver pieces . . . and bought with them the potter's field" (Matthew xxvii.5,6,7).

The Spirit of Christ spoke in David of a tragedy which must have appalled the "sweet psalmist of Israel." The agonies of Psalm xxii. could never have been part of *his* experience. The abominable torture and degradation of crucifixion was not practised by the Jews, yet their cry of hatred and demand for the Roman horror of the cross was heard, prophetically, more than one thousand years before. David wrote, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? . . . They pierced my hands

and my feet." The beloved disciple, in recording the scene of the room with closed doors (John xx.20) brings us, in this late day, not only a moving presentation of his Lord, and ours, with pierced hands, but also the fulfilment of that foretelling. "They parted my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture" — one sees that psalmist king of long ago writing, with wonder at the words of his inspiration, knowing that his tear-dimmed eyes were seeing visions of generations beyond his day.

"These things, therefore, the soldiers did" wrote John — but, unlike David, he was looking *back*, over half a lifetime, to the fulfilment scene itself, and, though sorrow must have brought tears with that sad memory, he dwelt in the "newness of life" that *perceived* the "love of God, because He laid down His life for us" (I John iii.16).

"Where is the proof of the truth of your bible?" demanded an atheist prince of a Christian member of his household. The brief, but complete, answer came — "Sire, the Jews." Dispersed and dispossessed, for centuries the victims of world hatred, distinct and identified amid the intermixtures of other races of mankind, this ancient race is a present living testimony to the truth of prophecy. The sacred books of their prophets are still in their hands. The foretelling of their Messiah's coming, His rejection, and even the manner of His death and future sovereignty, remains as immutable as the character of Jehovah, the God of their fathers. Their whole history confounds the puny reasonings of unbelief. Long before the triumphs and victories of David, their king, Israel was warned. Before the far reaching wisdom and might of Solomon astonished the eastern civilisation, leaving potentates nonplussed at the evidence of divine favour and guidance in Israel, the word of their prophet had spoken with dreadful solemnity, "If ye walk contrary to Me and will not hearken unto Me . . . I will make your cities waste . . . I will scatter you among the heathen" (Leviticus xxvi. 21,31,33). At the very border of the land of promise, into which Israel was about to enter by the favour of Jehovah, Moses rehearses their history, and repeats the warning from the Very Source of the Power that had carried them thus far: "Take heed lest ye forget the covenant

of the Lord your God . . . the Lord shall scatter you among the nations" (Deuteronomy iv.). The literal fulfilment of these prophecies is a warning to any who doubt the literal exactitude of the fulfilment of the promise of Christ Himself, "I will come again."

But to those who love Him — with that bridal affection which He values — His promise is sure and unfailing of performance. To them it is the voice of the Bridegroom — true and incomparably precious amid the falsity of the world. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me, and again, a little while, and ye *shall* see Me . . . Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and *your* joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi.19 & 22) — the voice and the assurance of the Son of God, a man and a divine person! So near to the time of His return to the Father who had sent Him, He tells them of the "little while" which would follow His resurrection and departure — that "little while" of the working of God for the glory of Christ into which they entered in the intelligence given of the Spirit, and in which we, too, in our own day, wait, with confidence, His sure return.

EDWARD T. WOOD

COALS OF FIRE

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."
(Romans xii.20)

THE GENERAL sense of this scripture is clear, namely, that the follower of Christ is not to practise such reprisals upon his enemies as were permitted by the law of Moses. He is not to exact an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but to love his enemies, do good to them that hate him, and pray for such as despitefully use him (Matthew v.38-44). The difficulty is of apprehending the force of the figure used in the verse. In what way do we heap coals of fire on the head of an enemy when we feed and refresh him?

Turning to the Old Testament, we find that Paul is quoting Proverbs xxv.21,22, except the last clause, "And the Lord shall reward thee." By further search, we discover that the phrase, "coals of fire," occurs in several other passages in the

Old Testament. From these passages we gather that the Hebrew word (*gacheleth*), translated "coals of fire" in Proverbs xxv.21,22, is frequently used elsewhere in connection with the outpouring of the direct judgment of God upon guilty man, while it also bears a typical sense where used of the burning of sacrifices upon the altar and of the holy incense before the Lord.

Thus, in the first sense, we read of coals of fire being kindled at the brightness of the presence of Jehovah coming in judgment, (2 Samuel xxii.9,13; Psalm xviii.8,12,13); of sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of juniper for the ungodly (Psalm cxx.4); of burning coals to fall upon the enemies of the righteous (Psalm cxl.10); of Ezekiel being instructed to fill both hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city of Jerusalem in token of God's judgment (Ezekiel x.2). These scriptures all speak of the execution of the wrath of God, and are in this sense connected with the context of Romans xii.20, where the apostle quotes from Deuteronomy xxxii.35, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord."

The same word in the second (typical) sense occurs in Leviticus xvi.12 with reference to the burning of sweet incense to Jehovah by Aaron on the great day of atonement. When the high priest applied the coals of fire to the specially compounded incense in the censer, the sweet odours of the spices were disseminated throughout the Holy of holies for the acceptance of himself and the blood of sprinkling for the mercy-seat. In this case the application of fire brought out the sweet-smelling savour which typified the incomparable excellences of Christ Jesus, but we do not read that there was ever such a fragrant accompaniment of the fire of vengeance, which came, for instance, upon the cities of the plain.

Now looking again at the text in Romans, we are exhorted in the case of our enemies, not to use the fire of vengeance, for this belongs to God (see 2 Timothy iv.14 New Tr.), but that fire from the altar of incense which will cause a fragrance of Christ to rise to God. Feeding and refreshing the enemy is to act in the spirit of Christ, which is ever glorifying to God. We thereby turn the evil of others to account by mak-

ing it the occasion for an exhibition of a Christ-like act. The coals of fire cause the fragrance of Christ to ascend. There is a similar thought in Ephesians iv.31 — v.2, where there are links between the avoidance of wrath and bitterness, the imitation of the forgiveness of Christ, and walking in love for an odour of sweet smell as Christ did. Compare also “the sweet savour of Christ” spoken of in 2 Corinthians ii.15.

No doubt there is in the expression “coals of fire” (Proverbs xxv.22; Romans xii.20), an allusion to Psalm cxl.9,10. There the prayer of the oppressed for justice is, “As for the head of those that compass me about . . . let burning coals fall upon them.” But the child of grace displays not the spirit of vengeance but the spirit of his Master, and overcomes evil with good. Such kindly acts may have the effect of melting the hard heart of the enemy, but we do not think that this is the direct meaning of the figure in the text. W. J. HOCKING

KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS

(Exodus xxxiv.7.)

O my soul, hearken to the melody of this sweet note. The thought may sometimes rise, that mercy visits but a favoured few;—that the rare gift enriches but rare souls. Nay, mercy’s arms are very wide. Mercy’s heart is very large. Mercy’s mansions are very many. It has brought saving joy for countless. Yet the doors stand open. Thousands have found. But there are stores for thousands yet.

Will any hesitate? Will any sigh, There cannot be this hope for me? Whence is the fear? Is the reply, Iniquity forbids? This Name sweeps down such obstacle. It cries, The Lord is a God, “forgiving iniquity.” Is it added, But transgressions are so vile? The Name still speaks, The Lord is a God, forgiving iniquity and transgression. Is it further said, But sins appear in countless multitudes? The Name continues, Our Lord is a God, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. If all the sins of all the lost — if all the filth of all the fiends in hell, were piled on your one conscience: flee to the Cross, plead this sure word, and as our God is true, He will be found forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

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from the Scripture of Truth

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JUNE 1965

No. 6

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecraig, Sydney N.S.W.

PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PETTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

ADOPTION

In the New Testament the act of placing believers in the position of sons is called *adoption*. Dignity and privilege are the prominent features of sonship, while life and love are inseparable from the relationship of children. One who is *adopted* is not necessarily a child by birth, as Moses who became the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus ii.10; Hebrews xi.24), and Esther the daughter of Mordecai (Esther ii.7), by *adoption*, not birth. Believers are both the children of God by birth and the sons of God by *adoption*.

In the Old Testament, *adoption* was true of the Israelites nationally (Romans ix.4). Jehovah speaks of the nation as His firstborn son (Exodus iv.22,23; Hosea xi.1), having been chosen out of all other nations to occupy this premier position of sonship to God (Deuteronomy xiv.2). Sonship was a place of special privilege; thus God spoke of Isaac as Abraham's "only son," though the patriach had also Ishmael and the children of Keturah, but these were not ranked with the son and heir of promise.

Believers are now placed in the position of spiritual sons, having "received the Spirit of *adoption*, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans viii.15). This high distinction is not yet made public to the world, nor are we yet in possession of those circumstances of glory to which we are entitled because we are sons; hence "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the *adoption*, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans viii.23). The day of Christ's appearing is the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans viii.19). This is therefore the day of *adoption* also, the sons of God being then owned and displayed as such before the world. This *adoption* is the result of Christ's redemption (Galatians iv.5), while we learn from Ephesians i.5 that our *adoption* was an object of God's predestination ("children" should be "sons" in this verse).

W. J. HOCKING

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XXXV. The Power of an endless Life (Hebrews vii.16)

One morning not long ago this country was moved (in common with people everywhere) by the news that a great statesman and leader of our nation, Sir Winston Churchill, had passed away. Whatever the individual judgment of the achievements of this great man may be, Christian folk generally will surely remember him as one whom God raised up to guide the affairs of the British people at a time of unparalleled peril and anxiety.

Nothing that happens in this world can hinder the working out of the will of God, and the Almighty prepares from time to time those whom He uses as instruments to secure the accomplishment of His purposes. Scripture records many such. Nebuchadnezzar—an evil man indeed until God humbled him (Daniel iv.)—was used for the punishment of God's own unfaithful people. Some years later that same people, under the leadership of Nehemiah, enjoyed the protection of a Persian monarch (see Nehemiah ii.). How glad they must have been to have the support of such a man in their work and witness for the true God. We in our day thank God who heard the prayers of His people, and through Winston Churchill above all others saved civilisation from a most terrible evil.

While an able and trusted leader remains alive, there is a measure of security in the thought that, should circumstances of danger recur, he will be available for help and counsel. But when he has gone the way of all the earth this is no longer possible, and a sense of bereavement is therefore inevitable. The great man has passed away, and no situation however desperate can bring him back. How very final death is as far as this world is concerned!

Against the background of such an event as this, how comforting it is for the believer to know that the great Captain of his salvation, having *risen* victoriously from the grave, now *lives* at the right hand of the Majesty on high (He-

brews i.3: see also Ch. viii. 1 and xii.2). Having destroyed, or annulled, him that had the power of death (Ch. ii.14), Christ is now the Deliverer of all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Christ having died once for the redemption of mankind, death has no more dominion over Him (Romans vi.9). He lives—triumphant!

Chapter vii. of the epistle to the Hebrews develops this theme, and shows the believer that his interests are fully safeguarded by the fact that the Son of God, who once died for him, now lives for him as his great High Priest. Under the old Aaronic order of things, high priests came and went; they were not suffered to continue by reason of death (verse 23). Moreover they were imperfect, some very much more so than others: and everyone of them had infirmity (verse 28). How often must the death of a high priest in Israel have meant a change for the worse, and given rise to the sort of misgiving we are conscious of today!

But in the case of our great High Priest, the Son of God, how gloriously different! He belongs to another order altogether. He is constituted an High Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. In order to provide a pattern for this, Melchisedec is introduced, a man who (so far as the scripture record is concerned) was “without father, without mother, without descent (a most important matter for an Aaronic priest—see Ezra ii.61-63, and Nehemiah vii.63-65), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (verse 3): “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” (verse 8).

The fact that Christ is now beyond the power of death ensures that His gracious service in heaven as Intercessor for His people will continue for as long as they need Him. As verses 24 and 25 declare, “This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing *He ever liveth* to make intercession for them.”

What unfailing comfort the knowledge of this should bring to us all! Change and decay in all around we certainly see,

but the One who changes not, who "continueth ever," will remain to the end of the age the strength and support of those who put their trust in Him.

E. A. PETTMAN

WHERE WILL CHRIST COME?

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians iv.16,17).

There have been, in the past, memorable meetings between those who have exerted their influence in human affairs. Great kings, in war and in peace — statesmen of nations, leaders in learning and in the arts — men dedicated to service of good and those driven by impulses of evil: all are recorded somewhere in the chequered history of the world. There have been meetings full of promise — which have been held at the place appointed — but the purpose has failed of fulfilment. There have been others where intent was in harmony with fulfilment but death intervened. More than nineteen centuries of years have passed since a man was directed to write "Go to, now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go . . . ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (James iv.).

Yet there is, available to man, a meeting such as has never been recorded in the pages of the past. To Him, alone, who has appointed it, the time is known; but all may know the PLACE of that glad gathering. Though it be future by hours or years, yet it is certain — as no human project can be — it is a TRYST made by the SON OF GOD with those He loves — and for whom He died.

WHERE will He come? Believers in Thessalonica knew in the early days of their turning "to God from idols to serve the living and true God." They were gladly aware that their true citizenship was not earthly, and, like their brethren in

Philippi, they "looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," who would meet them in the AIR on their way to the Father's house.

The thoughts of men turn to world betterment, and the outcome of education and research exhibits an outward expression of growth to this end. In earth's earlier days a solitary preacher of rightness warned a prosperous world of the outcome of its licentious wrongdoing, and even built a ship, with no slip-way to any water, and, in full view of a world of ridicule and unbelief that perished as "the waters increased, and bare up the Ark, and it was lift up ABOVE THE EARTH" (Genesis vii.17).

The contrast between belief and unbelief in the truth of the warning was the contrast of life with death. To Noah, the tainted earth was the scene of coming calamity. He pleaded through the long years for dissociation from it. He was inviting men to an incomparably better citizenship than that in which they were enmeshed. Day followed day, and the earth-bound were deceived by the sameness of seeming continuity. Longsuffering delay was interpreted as evidence of a false warning, but the Flood came, and in the history of more than one ancient people will be found a record of the overthrow of a world that once was — while a family of faith was safe, "lifted up ABOVE the earth."

So does Paul pass on to the Philippian believers the same harmony of thought: "our conversation (our citizen state) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" (Phil.iii.20). It is not to the earth that He comes, for, later, when He comes to the earth, it must be for judgment. His believing people do "not come into judgment" (John v.24); He comes to meet them ABOVE the arena of judgment. They are caught up to be *received* by Him — the energy that brings them is divine in its source as in its operation. Not one remains who has, in simple trust, answered to the divine welcome to safety. History will again produce one of its momentous episodes repeating the unbelief of the past, save that this stupendous event has eternal consequences for those who have no part in the glory and wonder of it.

The Meeting Place is known, indeed, and with astonished relief will the changed bodies receive the great impulse of that Eternal Life which has been secured to them in the risen Son of God. Nahum declares, "the clouds are the dust of His feet" (chapter i.3), and the psalmist saw the gleaming chariots of the heavens as they drove across space and sang in worship at the thought of His might "Who maketh the clouds His chariot" (Psalm civ.). At Bethany a little company who "have seen and their hands have handled" the risen One who had died, looked again at the chariots of the heaven till one "received Him out of their sight." To them, as to Elisha beholding, in his day, "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings ii.12), there was an exulting awareness of earth overcome, of limits overwhelmed and restrictions dispersed. "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke xxiv.52).

Where will He come? He will come into the realm of "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians ii.2). It is there He has appointed to meet us. Through this sphere of contra influence He passed as Man risen from the dead—to this invisible kingdom He will come, and with power beyond human capacity to know. In the long years of the captivity when Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed, his words were heard from the first day (Daniel x.). The heavenly messenger was delayed, in that area of hindrance, by the unseen spirit of dominance over Persia, but no power-prince of the air shall hinder the coming of the One whom God has "set at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Ephesians i.20, 21).

In this kingdom of the air a shout will be heard by those who hear beyond the discords of earth and the many voices of men. It is no ordinary shout, and the word used to describe it is only once employed. It is evident there is no shout to compare with it. In the divine record there is "the shout of a king"—it overawed the enemies of Israel—there is the shout of a whole people "when the ark of the covenant

of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again" (I Samuel iv.5). It was the frenzied shout of fanaticism soon to be silenced by mourning. There is only one word used exclusively for this great Voice—KELEUSMA! It combines encouragement with power—it comes from the very heart of the One who delivers it as a WELCOME and an ENABLING. It is the VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM HIMSELF.

An earthly portrayal of this coming heavenly event is discerned in the Record of long ago—at least seventeen centuries before the Son of God came among men. There, in the Book of the Beginning, we are shown an ageing father, still sorrowing for his absent son. The fingers of death reach out toward his tents, "for the famine was sore in the land." The dearth of two years has brought home to him, again, that sense of the failure of earth's resources, and he waits the return of his other sons from Egypt with food. Their arrival is vividly portrayed in Genesis xlv.26. Their first word to Jacob is, "Joseph—yet alive," and as they rehearse "all the words of Joseph," and tell of the place of meeting—"the good land of Goshen"—the wagons of enabling are already at the tent door. All human effort of travel is redundant—there is food, too, for the way—but the abundant joy of the MEETING is to come. The Spirit of God takes the record, suddenly, to the distant land. In Genesis xlvi.1, Israel takes his journey: at verse 29, "Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented HIMSELF unto him."

We may be sure, in this our day, that, unseen indeed—as by Jacob long ago—the One of whom Joseph was type, is making ready HIS chariot. He, too, gives us food for the way, the wagons of enabling are of HIS providing. But, far better than the evidences that surround and support us, will be that glorious moment in THE PLACE OF HIS APPOINTING when HE WILL PRESENT HIMSELF to ALL HIS OWN in welcoming love.

EDWARD T. WOOD

THE BOOK OF JOB

XIII

We come to the second part of God's address to Job. Chapter xl., verses 6-8: "Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto (or, inform thou) Me. Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be righteous?" Here is the third word of divine rebuke to Job, put (in grace) in the form of questions as before, but of very serious import. God is infinitely high over all, and man's proper place before Him is surely one of humility and trust.

The first rebuke (chapter xxxviii., verse 2) was, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" Job was upright and feared God, but his knowledge of God was limited, and he needed not to argue but to learn. The second rebuke (chapter xl., verse 2) reads, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." Such an attitude towards God is wholly incongruous for puny man. And now the third rebuke is the most serious: "Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?" These words must have touched Job keenly. Elihu had been angry with Job because he justified himself rather than God; now Job is made to realise that clinging to his self-righteousness amounted even to accusing God, Who had allowed trouble to come upon him for his good. How serious it is for man to dare to condemn God the Judge of all (Hebrews xii.23), and how solemn will be the judgment prophesied by Enoch (Jude 14), when the Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him! Job was not ungodly, but he needed to learn not to go about to establish his own righteousness, but to submit himself unto the righteousness of God.

God continued to speak to Job with an irony which will bring Job at length to an end of himself altogether. Chapter xl., verses 9-14: "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind (or bandage) their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that (or praise thee because) thine own right hand can save thee." What words these are for Job still smitten with boils from head to feet and sitting among the ashes!

God now speaks to Job of a creature He describes as "the chief of the ways of God." Chapter xl., verse 15, "Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox." This is generally regarded as the hippopotamus, and may be described as a river-ox, a creature of immense strength. Verse 17, "He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones (or thighs) are wrapped together (or woven, knit together)." Verse 19, "He that made him can make his sword to approach unto him" can read "He that made him gave him his sword, or scythe:" this may refer to the creature's tusk.

Finally, in chapter xli., God speaks at greater length of another creature, "leviathan," similar to "behemoth" in that both are amphibious, that is, living both on land and in water. Verses 1-3: "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?" This is generally taken to refer to the crocodile. Both this and the hippopotamus were common on the Nile, and would be known at least by report to those where Job and his friends lived.

Verses 10-11: "None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before Me? Who hath prevented

Me (or, first given to Me), that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine." This reminds us of Romans xi.35, "Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" Clearly if God is so great beyond thought, and Job so little, it was entirely wrong for Job to attempt to justify himself at God's expense, and he must learn his true place of self-abasement. Christians who know the greatness and the grace of God in Christ can say with Paul (Romans xi.36), "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Chapter xli., verses 18-21, still speaking of leviathan, read in the New Translation, "His sneezings flash light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go forth flames; sparks of fire leap out: out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a boiling pot and cauldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth." This seems to refer to the effects produced by the violent movements of the crocodile in the water, and his steaming breath in the hot sunshine. Verse 22, "sorrow is turned into joy before him," can be read, "terror danceth before him," referring to the terrified movements of other creatures at the sight of it. Verse 25, "by reason of breakings they purify themselves," should read, "they are beside themselves with consternation." Verse 30, "sharp stones (or potsherds) are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things (or threshing-sledge) upon the mire" no doubt refer to the impression left on the mud where the creature has been lying.

God's concluding words are, "Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride (or, over all the proud beasts)." Concerning behemoth and leviathan, Carey writes, "There is reason to believe that in the days of Job those monsters of the Nile, being comparatively undisturbed by man, attained to a much more considerable size than do those of the present day." If His works are so marvelous, how infinitely great must God be in Himself, and it is in His presence that Job now finds himself.

In the beginning of chapter xlii., the last chapter of the Book of Job, we have the divine work completed in Job's soul. Job now sees himself no longer as he had appeared in his own estimation or in that of his fellow-men, but as God saw him. Through grace, the divine light shone in, and Job abhors himself and repents, and so is brought to the point of abundant blessing. Before this, he had said, "When the eye saw *me*, it gave witness to me"; now he says, "mine eye seeth *Thee*. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent."

Chapter xlii., verses 1-6 "Then Job answered the Lord (Jehovah), and said, I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Plainly Job has at last learnt his lesson. Instead of persisting in his own lengthy statements and arguments, he owns his lack of understanding and knowledge; instead of proudly declaring, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go" (chapter xxvii.6), he now humbly regards himself with disgust, and taking the lowest place he owns to a total change of mind before God. It was brought about by his seeing God; he became conscious of being in the presence of God through God speaking directly to him, that is, by His word. This is the way in which the sinner is saved today, and the Christian is blessed. God's word lays hold of a man, brings him face to face with Him, makes him feel his deep spiritual need, and reveals the way in which that need is fully met in Christ's death and blood-shedding and resurrection. God's word also teaches the believer his nothingness and worthlessness, and reveals all that Christ is to him and for him, so that he is brought to say, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, Who has loved

me, and given Himself for me" (Galatians ii.20, New Trans.). It was the conscience-stricken taxgatherer in Luke xvii. who prayed, "O God, have compassion on me, the sinner" (New Trans.), who went down to his house justified, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee.

Job was of course from the beginning of this Book a converted man, that is, a man in whom God had wrought and whom He had renewed by grace. The story shows that even such a man cannot stand in God's presence in his own strength, nor be righteous in his own person before God; it shows that further lessons are needed in order that the converted man may be delivered from self, submissively taking God's side against himself, so as to enjoy a settled place before God in grace. For the Christian, all is possessed and enjoyed in Christ.

Job has learned his lesson, one that all Christians need to learn, the coming to an end of self and to a settled assurance in God's presence through grace. We close this last article but one on Job by a quotation from J. N. Darby. "Job did not know himself, and up to this time, with all his piety he had never been in the presence of God. How often it is the case that even throughout a long life of piety, the conscience has never been really set before God. Hence peace, such peace as cannot be shaken, and real liberty, are not known as yet. There is a desire after God, there is the new nature; the attraction of His grace has been felt: nevertheless God and His love, as it really is, are not known . . . God alone can search out what the heart really is before Him; and the absence of all self-will, perfect agreement with the will of God, absolute submission like that of Christ, these things God alone could test, and thus lay bare the nothingness of man's heart before Him . . . revealing at the same time that He acts in grace for the good of the soul which He loves."

(To be concluded)

W. H. L. GRAHAM

THE MILK OF THE WORD

“As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter ii.2).

Is not this a passage often misconceived of? Does it mean that we are to be always as babes in Christ returning to the first elements for nourishment? I apprehend this is how many take it. But this is not its force, as a little consideration may suffice to show.

There is of course a stage in our life as Christians in which we are necessarily and rightly “babes”. The apostle John addresses himself to these (I John ii.). But the Corinthians were rebuked for the continuance of such a state, and to them carnality was the true synonym for its protraction: “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (I Corinthians iii.1). And both here and in the Epistle to the Hebrews the apostle blames them for the necessity they had for “milk” (Hebrews v.12-14).

Here in Peter the thought is different. The word of God itself is milk, the whole of it; and we are to be not simply as babes, but as *new-born* babes in our desire for it.

To a new-born babe what is milk? Its very life, we may say. And such is God’s word to us, and such is to be its place in our affections. The word, the whole of it, is that which God has provided for us; and it would be dishonouring it and Him Who gave it, to extract certain elements from it, and dismiss the rest as not available for food. It is *all* food, if appropriated as such. The highest and most advanced truths, so-called, do but expand, illustrate and confirm the gospel itself, than which no truth is more wonderful, deeper, or “higher.”

We do not leave the gospel behind as we go on with scripture, nor do we even have to turn back to it to find the refreshment it supplies for our souls; but it is the gospel itself that travels on with us, more and more learned, more and more developing itself to us continually.

No one can doubt that it is the milk of the word that nourishes the believer. It was the word of God whereby he was born again; it is the same word whereby he is fed.

There is no contrast here as in I Corinthians iii. and in Hebrews v. between milk for the immature and solid food for the adult, blame being put on those who did not profit by the word, rising from elements to higher truths.

There the Spirit of God dwells on the suitability of the food provided for the babe when born; and all are encouraged to desire earnestly the pure nourishment which God supplies so liberally for the saint's intelligence; as a mother's breast yields nourishment to her babe physically, so God's word is food to our spiritual understanding. Extracted

ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

(Note on Luke iv.19)

This is the "year" (not a solar, but a dispensational, division of time) wherein God proclaims the good pleasure of His grace towards sinners, and man may, by faith, obtain his highest advantage through Christ. The fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah lxi.1, 2 concerning this "year" was announced by our Lord, Who read the passage aloud in the synagogue at Nazareth, stopping short before the clause, "the day of vengeance of our God," which remains in abeyance for the present. Note that grace is for a "year," but vengeance for a "day" only (see also Isaiah lxiii.4). The "acceptable year" began with the Lord's utterance (Luke 4.21), and will go on to include His beneficent reign of a thousand years over the earth.

It is called the "acceptable" year because it is the time of "good tidings," when God is making known His incomparable love towards men and is bestowing the choice blessings of His grace upon them freely. There is in the name a probable allusion to the year of jubilee, established by Moses, which recurred every fifty years, when slaves were freed and debts forgiven (Leviticus xxv.8-17).

The "acceptable" time specially for the Gentiles was foretold by Isaiah (xlix.8) and quoted by Paul (2 Corinthians vi.2).

W. J. HOCKING

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JULY 1965

No. 7

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

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PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PETTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

We publish this month the last of two series of articles, and are certain readers generally will wish us to express their thanks to the authors for the ministry so ably given in these papers.

Readers will find it useful to preserve for re-reading their copies of WORDS OF HELP containing the articles on the Book of Job by Mr. W. H. L. Graham, since these contain a helpful summary of the teaching of a Book which has more relevance to the spiritual problems of our day than is often supposed.

It is hoped to publish the four papers by Mr. Edward T. Wood on the Second Coming of Christ as a separate booklet, and an announcement as to this may be expected later.

(continued from inside back cover)

iii.23). "Looking unto Jesus," to the Master who has bought us with His own blood, will enable us to perform the most monotonous tasks with fervency of spirit, rejoicing that we are able in so doing to bring glory to His name.

Now if this be true of worldly occupations, how much more should it be true in the labour that is more directly in His service? Slackness here can only arise because we allow ourselves to be affected by the condition of the church at large, and because faith in the reality of the Lord's presence with us is so dim.

But if there is slackness around us, it is all the more urgent that we should be full of zeal. If then some service is given to us, let us apply our minds or our hands to it in as thorough-going a manner as we possibly can. Certainly we must seek guidance and help from God, but we dare not make our own feebleness an excuse for lack of earnestness and care. Let to us, let us apply our minds or our hands to it in as thorough—"The zeal of Thine house hath consumed Me."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE BOOK OF JOB**XIV**

The commencement of chapter xlii., the last chapter of the Book, shows that Job has learnt his lesson. There is, however, a further test before he enjoys the blessing God intends for him; it arises in connection with the three friends, who had so evidently failed to give any true help. Chapter xlii., verses 7-10: "And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job. And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

Elihu had been angry with the three friends because they were unable to help Job and yet condemned him. God is angry with them because they did not speak rightly of Him. We sometimes say that actions speak louder than words; nevertheless the matter of the words we speak is important, and the Lord Himself said, Matthew xii.37, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Our aim surely should be to avoid being blamable toward God and man. We may wrongly condemn (or commend) others through not knowing all the circumstances of the case. We may state categorically that God will approve this, or will not accept that, when our words amount only to what we think He ought to do or not to do. When a mistake has been made it ought to be acknowledged both

to God and to the person concerned. So here the three friends must offer up sacrifices, and must also go to Job. Will Job show he forgives them by praying for them, and that in the right spirit? He does so, and then God turns his captivity. James v.16 reads: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

Some have taken God's words to the friends as commending Job for what he had said in chapters xl. and xlii., "Behold, I am vile," and "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" but His words to them are, "Ye have not spoken of *Me* the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." It seems therefore that God is referring to the general trend of the speeches in the earlier chapters, where Job shows that he knew God far more truly than they did. It is noticeable that four times in the two verses 7 and 8, God refers to Job as "My servant." God does not speak of Elihu, which seems to confirm that he was a true servant of God who had spoken rightly on His behalf.

Verse 11: "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned (or condoled with) him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man (every one) also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold (or golden ring)." In chapter xix. Job had complained that God had put his brethren far from him, and that his kinsfolk had failed him and his familiar friends had forgotten him, while his domestic servants no longer attended on him. Now all is fully restored and put right.

Verse 12: "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses." The numbers at the beginning (chapter i., verse 3) were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, and five hundred of yoke of oxen and of she asses. All was now doubled. When it comes to his family, verse

13, "He had also seven sons and three daughters," which are the numbers of his first family who perished when their house blew down (chapter i., verse 19); but those had not ceased to exist like the animals which perished, and so in the first resurrection there will doubtless be the double, fourteen sons and six daughters.

Verses 14 and 15: "And he called the name of the first Jemima; and the name of the second Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren." The name Jemima can mean pure, or the dove; Kezia is cassia, an oriental perfume; and Keren-happuch is said to mean a horn of some kind. C. P. Carey declares that there is an Arab tradition of immemorial standing about a Queen Jemama, who was the first sovereign in a province of Arabia, and the strong probability is that this ancient Arab Queen was no other than Job's daughter Jemima.

Verses 16 and 17: "After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days." This is a striking end to a remarkable story. It is clearly God's will and pleasure to bless His creatures, and as soon as the individual is in a fit state, with the enemy Satan defeated, God's blessing is fully and freely bestowed and enjoyed. May this encourage and strengthen us when we are passing through times of adversity and suffering; God will ensure that we do learn the needed lessons, and enter eventually into blessing both here and hereafter.

There is a question as to Job's age when he died. One suggestion has been made that to the hundred and forty years mentioned, must be added Job's age at the commencement of the Book, and as in other respects God gave him after his restoration twice as much as he had before, so perhaps in the years of his life also; half of one hundred and forty is seventy; the total length of life would then be two hundred and ten years. On the other hand, Mr. Wm. Kelly considers

that the hundred and forty years refer to the whole life of Job. Abraham lived one hundred and seventy-five years; Isaac one hundred and eighty; Jacob one hundred and forty-seven; of both Abraham and Isaac as well as of Job it is said that at death they were old and full of days (Genesis xxv. and xxxv.). In both Genesis v. and xi., figures are given which indicate the total length of the lives mentioned. On the whole we may conclude that Job was one hundred and forty years old at death.

Having reached the end of this unique book, let us survey the whole of it very briefly. It commences with a man descended from fallen Adam but renewed by God in grace, and blessed much in piety, family life and outward circumstances. God who reads the heart saw that Job was turning His spiritual blessing into a robe of self-righteousness which deceived him. God had further prosperity for Job, but would first prepare him spiritually to receive it, and employs Satan's malice to bring him into deep distress. Satan then disappears from the scene, and Job, who had so far maintained a right attitude and given (unwittingly of course) the lie to Satan's wicked words that Job would curse God to His face, is brought in the presence of his friends to curse the day of his birth. The friends were of no direct help, for their spiritual discernment was less than that of Job himself, and they are silenced. Elihu the interpreter then speaks to bring Job's thoughts and desires into the right direction. Job is silenced. God Himself then speaks directly to Job, to humble him and make him conscious of being in the Divine Presence. Job now sees himself as he really is, defiled with sin, and judging his pride and self-righteousness, he repents. He has met God. Now it is safe to entrust him with the further blessing God had in store, and so his latter end is blessed more than his beginning.

Wonderful indeed are the thoughts and ways of the blessed God. May we Christians who have been so superlatively loved and blessed by God our Father with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, may we be more what

the Lord would have us to be, in thought, word and deed, while still here in the body. We may well say to Him, "Astonished at Thy feet we fall: Thy love exceeds our highest thought: Henceforth be Thou our all in all, Thou who our souls with blood hast bought; May we henceforth more faithful prove, and ne'er forget Thy ceaseless love."

We conclude with a further quotation from the Epistle of James. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he (or it) receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth (or, is drawn) nigh. Grudge (complain) not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy (blessed) which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James v., verses 7-11).

(Concluded)

W. H. L. GRAHAM

THOUGHTS ON THE EFFECT OF THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS

"THE LORD is not slack concerning His promise . . . but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter iii.9-11).

The coming of the Lord Jesus into the air precedes the

“Day of the Lord” and the “Day of God.” These “days” or periods are distinct in scripture. Paul emphasises this in his first letter to Corinth (Ch.xv.23), “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

The knowledge of His coming reign comforts His waiting people. They will rejoice to see Him in His rightful place. When Pilate said to the Jews “Behold your King,” he sought to avoid the outcome of their hatred by presenting the victim in derision — the negation of royalty. But the King had been presented to Israel, and no act of man can thwart the purposes of immeasurable might. “HE MUST REIGN.” Satanic enmity to truth and holiness can have no part in His endless Kingdom. It will present His own perfect character.

But mere knowledge of the future is unproductive. It is only as we live in the awareness of these coming events that we become conscious of the ephemeral presentation of earthly things. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”

The effect of the coming of Christ for His own people will very rapidly appear. There is never a static condition in the things of God — all is in movement toward fulfilment of His design. But as when Christ moved among men there were morally the deaf and the blind, so, when He comes into the air for His people, the world will not hear the shout of His coming nor see Him in the clouds of gathering. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” (I Thessalonians iv.16), and for centuries past there have been those who love Him and who listen for that personal shout of power and welcome which will proclaim, in a timeless flash, the ending of the waiting days.

Meanwhile we wait, as those waited to whom Peter wrote so many generations ago, and we know that never in the

records of the world, with its history of wars and catastrophes, its revolutions and upheavals, will there have been a moment such as this to which we hasten, when the trappings of earth will lie discarded and titles to possessions unclaimed, while graveyards long forgotten, will hold no longer the precious dust that slept till death was swallowed up in victory and mortal put on immortality.

In the day when Peter wrote his epistles, Calvary, with all its sorrow, and the resurrection aftermath with its joy, did not seem so far away. Yet the Spirit of God guided him to show the closing of that door of Grace set open, then, so widely as to welcome Jew and Greek, bond and free, to a unity in Christ Jesus as real and soul satisfying to believers as it was incomprehensible to a heedless world. The coming of the Lord for His people closes this day of opportunity more suddenly than, in that eastern land, their daylight ceased at sunset. The Master of the house will have risen up and shut to the door (Luke xiii.25). There are surely few, who, unlike their Master, can contemplate without sorrow the solemnity of this event. The door is for ever closed to PRETENCE, and only those who have been content with an outward semblance of reality even approach it. The world of unbelief knows nothing of it, and makes no attempt at entry.

The voices are silent that once preached the Gospel of the grace of God to men characterised by fallen nature. No more may the invitation go out to all to come by repentance into the citizenship of the heavenly company, for the Holy Spirit will have departed with the people of God.

The presence on earth of the Holy Spirit of God is very little realised. Through the years of Noah's building, both he and his construction were taken for granted. Yet his very presence was a warning, and his continued labour was divinely directed. Whenever, in our present world, there is constructive presentation of the goodness of God in the behaviour of His people, an evidence of His Spirit is shown to man. The world influence of evil has Satanic source, and it is mercifully restrained while God's people dwell here. In writing

to Thessalonian believers Paul reminds them of what he had already told them, "The mystery of lawlessness already works; only there is he who restrains now until he be gone, and then the lawless one shall be revealed" (2 Thess. ii.7: J.N.D.). The Spirit of God has always shown a protective care for His people, even when least they deserved it — but the day comes when that influence for the restraint of evil will be withdrawn. In that day man will exhibit an onrush of selfwill and self-indulgence without parallel in his history.

It is not difficult to imagine the outcome of that interruption of an accepted state of things which will result from the sudden absence of Christian people from the scenes of their activity in the world.

In Revelation xiii. John stood "upon the sand of the sea" and "saw a beast rise up out of the sea." The unsettled state of nations is presented in the sea symbol "which cannot rest" (Isaiah lvii.20). The symbols continue, and show the rise of Satan's substitute man, of whom Paul also writes, "Then shall that wicked be revealed . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians ii.8-10).

The counterfeits and substitutes of Satan have appeared and have been exposed many times in the past. The rod of Moses, cast before Pharaoh, became a serpent. The rods of the magicians were Satanic counterfeits soon to be consumed by the rod of divine authority. The earlier plagues, too, signs of coming judgment, were imitated by Pharaoh's agents with intent to represent their origin as mere human deception. But all the deceptive wisdom of Egypt could not nullify the effects of the plagues, and the day came when "the magicians said unto Pharaoh, this is the finger of God" (Exodus viii.19). The centuries passed with their records of substitution — in the worship of Baal, the idolatry of kings, and the uprising of false prophets — till the once powerful nation became no longer divinely supported, and, by its own choosing of an

impotent substitute, disintegrated into subjection and dispersal.

“At the end of these days” God spoke to them “in His Son,” and, once more, Satan joined issue in substitution. The tradition of Rabbis made “the word of God of none effect” (Mark vii.13), and the day of choice came when Satan produced *his* man whose name, Barabbas, means “son of a father” and whose character of sedition and murder was preferred to that of “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John i.14).

John saw, in spiritual symbol of a future day, Satan’s great substitute for the Son of Man, his counterfeit — a world leader — the “man of sin.” It is a clear voice — but it speaks “in heaven” — for earth has its *own* voice. “I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation xii.10). The accuser is cast out from heavenly access, for Christ has brought home His bride, and earth has, in consequence, received the deceiver “come in his *own* name” (John v.43).

But the Church is safe from failure — at last, gathered into a unity for which her Lord gave His life — brought into a harmony of peace unknown in all her history, and experiencing in unhindered measure the first wonders of the Bridegroom’s love to which, for so long, she has but feebly responded.

The calamity which approaches the world has been the subject of divine warnings — for God finds no pleasure in the sorrow of man. The warning through Daniel is particularly directed to His own people. Indeed he turns from Aramaic to the Hebrew tongue, after his seventh chapter, to write of their false messiah who shall come. It is a clear delineation — “Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers” (he is an apostate Jew), “nor the Desire of women” (Christ, the Anointed One), “he shall magnify himself above

all" (dominant autocracy), "he shall honour the god of forces (military might) (Daniel xi.37). "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" (Ch. xii.1).

So, in that sad aftermath of unbelief, the Jews, still striving for national re-establishment by all means save that of repentant return to the God of their fathers, receive the Man of Sin as Messiah, and "all that dwell upon earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation xiii.8). World unity proceeds apace — the present day brings many evidences of this approach. World-wide acclaim for the great leader will extend to force and compulsion by economic necessity, for "he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark" (Revelation xiii.16,17). The right hand of the manual worker, and the brain of the intellectual, will alike be brought into a subjection to world unity, as the last half of the week of years of the prophecy through Daniel unfolds.

By contrast with the onrush of this Satanic domination (under subtle guise of peace and human progress) the Good News of the coming of the true King into the earth arena is proclaimed by some who love His appearing more than their own lives. These come in the twofold energy of the spirit and power of Elias — that man of single purpose and devoted courage who faced a king-subject of the power of Evil, and stemmed the tide of nation-wide idolatry. There is no chariot of fire for his return. Grace brings him from his rest in waiting, at the peak of Jewish apostasy, to call once more — and for the last time — to all who will return to Jehovah before "the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi iv.5).

The suffering, and even death, of witnesses to the lingering grace of God in that day of turbulence and oppression is foretold (Revelation xiv.12,13). The blood of many will seal their faith, but the *heavenly* aftermath is shown to us, for it

is *there* that they sing the “song of Moses and the Lamb” (Ch.xv.3). It is a combined song, the significance of which is filled with instruction and with beauty. From the distance of a former dispensation, and over centuries of time, the echoes of that Song reach the Eternal State. It is the glorious Song of Redemption swelling into its crescendo of fulfilment — “Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood” (Ch.v.9). Its unchanging theme never tires the choir of the blood-bought throng who sing with ever growing understanding.

Far reaching indeed is the effect of the coming of the Lord Jesus for all who have known Him as Redeemer. Clear, too is the demarcation between the heavenly company and those of earth. The “good news” of the coming Earthly Kingdom draws many in repentance to face the Great Tribulation pressures from an evil autocracy. The Jews gather about their new temple in Jerusalem with frenzied nationalism, but the evil source of their apostasy tears apart his false treaty with them, and appears, uncloaked, demanding to be recognised and worshipped as their god indeed. Thus “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stands in the holy place” (Matthew xxiv.15).

The Jews rebel with warlike ferocity, despite the edict of the Power that has enforced world union and a world wide peaceful co-existence among men. The armies gather (Revelation xvi.13,14), and from many nations, for this false peace must be enforced — it is not really in the hearts of men! The Jews must be subjugated. Armies come to destroy them, and only the grace of God prevents their extermination.

The last half-week of years of Daniel’s prophecy runs its course, and the words of Zechariah xiv. will be fulfilled: “Behold the Day of the Lord cometh . . . for I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken . . . then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations . . . and His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives . . . and the Lord shall be King over all the earth.” Privately, in the Mount of Olives, Jesus reassures His

disciples, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew xxiv.). He tells them of His earthly throne of glory, and of the judgment of the living nations who enter the earthly kingdom or know the outcome of their rebellion in the place of sorrow (Matthew xxv.).

To those who know and love Him, the words of the Lord at the close of Matthew's record come with comfort and thanksgiving — "All power is given unto Me in *heaven* and in *earth*." How good to know that, for a thousand years, this earth will know a reign of such perfection and peace as has never been known since man's first failure, and to be sure that the judgment of "the dead, small and great" (Revelation xx.) will be in accord with His perfect assessment.

Toward the end of his long and comprehensive prophecy Isaiah tells of the servants of God who "shall sing for joy of heart" (Ch.lxv.14). The promise that follows awakens a song in the hearts of all who rejoice in the inestimable value of the blood of Christ — "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered . . . be glad and rejoice for ever . . . for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy" (Isaiah lxv.17-18). We, too, in our day of waiting, look with joy toward that Day of perfection, and say, with Peter, "We, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii.13.).

EDWARD T. WOOD

DILIGENCE IN BUSINESS

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"

(Romans xii.11).

THIS TWELFTH CHAPTER of Romans consists mainly of positive exhortations, but this makes it all the more important to pay heed to the few negative ones it contains.

"Not slothful in business" — what kind of business is referred to? There is nothing in the context to point specially to what is usually called by that name, yet certainly nothing to exclude it. Remembering the command to "do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus," we should be most unwise to exclude it. Perhaps the absence of specific reference is designed by the Holy Spirit to give the words the widest application.

Slothfulness — or perhaps we may substitute here the term *slackness* — is a most prominent characteristic of the present day, especially among those who are in paid employment. Indeed, anything like enthusiasm is reckoned a mark of immaturity. Men look askance at those showing zeal and diligence, as though they were seeking to acquire special favours for themselves, and they frown upon conscientiousness as reflecting upon their own shortcomings.

"Be not conformed to this world," the apostle had written earlier (verse 2), and it is vital for the believer to resist steadfastly in himself, any conformity to this spirit of slackness. Whatever men may say, we do not seek the favour of men, but to please the Lord. Is He not worthy of our best endeavours?

The world cynically reflects that the highest rewards go to those who "dress their shop window" most effectively; but the Christian looks not at the rewards the world gives, but towards that final assessment at the judgment seat of Christ.

We ought then, to turn a deaf ear to all suggestions that seek to denigrate thorough, painstaking work, remembering that we are privileged to do all as unto the Lord (Colossians

(continued inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIII

AUGUST 1965

No. 8

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecraig, Sydney N.S.W.

PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. FITTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

*Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1*

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

Once again we have drawn freely upon the ministry of servants of the Lord who have long since completed their course on earth. In the spirit of Hebrews xiii.7, we remember those who have spoken to us the word of God, following their faith, and "considering the end of their conversation."

Many of the articles which appeared in Magazines current years ago were particularly applicable to problems of the day in which they were written: others, such as those we reprint this month, have a message for our day. May we have grace to take such words to ourselves.

(continued from inside back cover)

example before them and thought they were doing God service; but this could not redeem their spirit from the charge of hypocrisy.

Let us remember that not all hypocrisy is studied and conscious; probably more often it is natural and unconscious, for the nature is fallen and the mind and conscience defiled. Christians even might be tainted with this leaven unless they let in the light of God's word fully to their hearts.

THEO DAVIS

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly," June/July 1930.)

Erratum: The last sentence at the foot of the inside front cover of July issue should read:—

"Let us be followers of Him of whom it was prophetically written: 'The zeal of Thine house hath consumed Me'."

THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

The sixth chapter of his gospel affords an example of John's method of communicating the truth—the record of a miracle performed by the Lord followed by a course of instruction based upon it.

The feeding of some five thousand persons had led the people to conclude that the Lord was a prophet (verse 14), and they sought to make Him a king (verse 15). But the position He accepted was that of Rabbi, or teacher (verse 25). As a result we have one of the greatest specimens of His teaching recorded in the New Testament.

Starting from the loaves of which the people had partaken the previous day, the Lord went on to speak of the manna their forefathers had eaten centuries before in the wilderness. Marvellous as this manna was, and rich with typical meaning, it had been given to sustain natural life only. Similarly the five barley loaves and two small fishes, though multiplied to match the need of a vast crowd, had satisfied only their physical hunger.

The Lord, however, had greater things of eternal value to impart. So once again the subject changes from the manna to "the true bread from heaven" (verse 32). Then He goes on to say, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (verse 35). Later still He declares: "I am that bread of life" (verse 48).

Then from verses 51-58 we come to the very heart of His teaching as to a leading truth of the Gospel, namely, eternal life. Chapter i, verse 4, had affirmed, "In Him was life." Now the Life-giver shows how life—spiritual life—is obtained; how it is sustained; and how it provides the capacity for enjoying the choicest spiritual experiences.

He says (verse 51) "I am the living bread etc.", and their subsequent question, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" opens the way to a flood of further light. The Lord had already said, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever," and that His flesh would be given "for the life of the world." Now He adds (verse 53), "Verily,

verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Thus He refers to His death as an absolute necessity if men are to live unto God.

That which a hungry man eats becomes life to him naturally, physically—as the five thousand on the mountain side proved. By eating the Lord's flesh and drinking His blood is meant the full acceptance *for ourselves* that He died *for us*. He loved us, and shed His blood to save us. *His* death therefore results in *our* life.

How essential to each of us individually is this personal appropriation of the Lord's death is emphasised in verse 54: "Whoso *eateth* My flesh, and *drinketh* My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." This latter refers to the day of the first resurrection in which all possessors of spiritual Godward life have their part (Revelation xx.6).

In verses 50, 51, 52, 53 and 58 (middle clause) the tense of the verb *eat* shows that the Lord was referring to the initial act by which life is obtained: the change to "eateth" in verses 54, 56, 57, and 58 (last clause), meaning continual eating, would appear to indicate the sustaining of the life already possessed. Hence we sing.

Nothing but Christ, as on we tread,
The Gift unpriced, God's living Bread.

Verse 56 speaks of Christ dwelling, or abiding, in the believer. The apostle could say, "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians ii.20: first part). He could also say, "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians i.21).

Verse 57 reads, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." This calls for larger notice.

As the apostles and disciples walked with the Lord Jesus day by day they learned that He was constantly looking to His Father. John iv. records His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, in which He turned her thoughts from the water that was in the well to a fountain

of water springing up into eternal life. He revealed Himself to her as the Messiah, the Christ.

A little later His disciples arrived back from their errand to buy meat in the city, and prayed *Him* to eat. But He answered them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He lived by, or from, the Father. Though He came to the well weary and thirsty, He could devote His attention to the deep need of the Samaritan woman. This, to Him, was meat and drink of an order that made Him independent of the material food the disciples brought.

On another occasion He went to the house of mourning at Bethany with the purpose of raising Lazarus to life. At the graveside He lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Having thus signified His dependence on His Father, He, by divine power, called from the tomb him that had been dead four days. The living Father had sent Him, and He who had lived by the Father would never lift up His eyes in vain.

These and other incidents would enable the disciples to learn the meaning of His words "I live by the Father." Though indeed the Son of God, he lived a dependent, subject life; i.e. He lived by the Father who had sent Him. (Compare Isaiah 1., verses 3, 4, 5).

What infinite grace is suggested in the second part of verse 57! nothing less than that believers should live by Him (i.e. the Lord Himself), Who was sending them into the world as His servants. He was saying to them, in effect, "By eating of and from Me you may nourish, maintain and enjoy the life you have through My death." John in his first epistle urges those to whom he wrote to follow this rule, and to walk as Jesus walked (chapter ii.6).

The second half of Galatians ii.20 shows how Paul closely followed the Lord in living by this principle of the dependent life, for he says "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Scripture sets before us no lower standard than this.

Then, in the last clause of verse 58, the Lord says, "He that

eateth of this bread shall live for ever." Even in heaven, because we shall still be creatures, *our* life will need to be sustained. "The pure river of water of life" will flow continually. We shall never tire of it, nor of the tree of life, everywhere accessible, yielding its full and constant supply of fruit for every season. *Then*, believers will be in the fullest enjoyment of eternal life, for the world, the flesh and the devil have no place in the unsullied regions of heaven.

At length, the final kingdom
 No bound, no end possessing,
 When heaven and earth
 God all in all
 Shall fill with largest blessing:
 All root of evil banished;
 No breath of sin to wither;
 On earth, on high,
 Naught else but joy
 And blissful peace for ever.
 (G. Gilpin)

P. WHITE

THINGS THAT MAKE FOR PEACE

It takes only two to make a quarrel, and then it often takes a hundred or more to make peace again; for "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water," and that surely is a good reason why we should "leave off contention, before there be quarreling" (Proverbs xvii.14, R.V.).

A large proportion of the wrangles among brethren would never be known, if it were more generally understood that it is almost invariably the best man who steps out of the dispute first. But too many, alas, are imbued with the mistaken notion that it involves a great loss of dignity to let another person have the last word. It is feared, however, that such persons have but a very meagre apprehension of true Christian dignity.

Of old, there was a war of words between Abram's herd-

men and Lot's herdmen. The father of the faithful, the depository of God's promises, bade his nephew take his choice, and go in whatever direction he pleased, only let there be no strife between them. Will anyone seriously allege that Abram, in this generous self-renouncing offer, sacrificed one iota of his dignity? Truly he had greater right to choose; but it is only rarely that the greater right is found, as then, in conjunction with the greater grace.

There might have been some reasonable excuse for the rarity of such a spirit as Abram's nineteen centuries before Christ, but there is none whatever now—nineteen centuries after Christ. No one with the Gospels in his hands can pretend that when the Lord Jesus was here below He contended for *His* rights. He was meek and lowly in heart. The cruellest taunts and jeers of His enemies did not rouse Him to retaliate. Even their blows and spittle did not provoke Him to utter one revengeful word. And we must not forget that He has, especially in this particular spirit of meekness, left us an example that we should follow His steps (I. Peter ii.20-24). If we had more of this lowly spirit of His, we should certainly be more at peace among ourselves.

“But we don't expect to have this kind of thing to put up with in the assembly of God,” exclaims some fiery Boanerges. “We look for something more Christlike from our brethren. If a man is cantankerous, he must be made to know his place.” It is perfectly true we all ought to be gentle and humble-minded. But there are the bellicose brethren among us; and how are we to deal with them? Will an angry word turn away their wrath? Can you subdue the workings of the flesh in others by the workings of the flesh in yourself? Are the weapons of our warfare carnal? No; on the contrary, it is by such means that bitterness spreads, and that breaches are widened.

On such occasions it is that we are called to set ourselves earnestly to pursue the “things that make for peace.” And the assembly is the sphere for the exercise of this virtue. Who but saints having a difference with one another could be exhorted to “be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians iv.2)? Such words could not be addressed to worldlings.

And since we find exhortations to peace and mutual forbearance in almost every Epistle of the New Testament, we ought not to be very surprised if we encounter contentious persons in our midst today.

What is to be done with a crotchety brother, who insists on having his own way, and is full of spiteful and abusive remarks? Let us remember that all of us are distinctly enjoined to "be of one mind, live in peace" (2 Corinthians xiii.11). Our individual aims, therefore, should be to preserve peace at any *personal* sacrifice whatever (always excepting the name of the Lord and His word). Let us **pray for the** troubler. Let us be patient with him. Let us refuse to retaliate in any sense. Let us believe that he is misled rather than actuated by evil motives. Let us not despise him, nor be angry with him. Considering ourselves if we were tempted in like manner, let us *in meekness* seek to restore him.

But besides the persons who abuse and those who are abused, there is another class who do a great deal of mischief (let us hope unconsciously) by their idle gossip. Brother X says something naughty about dear brother Y. At once the chattermags set to work. They champion Y, and the tale of his wrong spreads like wildfire. Brother X has fifty excellent qualities; but they are all forgotten, and his single transgression (arising perhaps from some misunderstanding) is magnified by the busybodies, until he is regarded by many as nothing less than a wolf in sheep's clothing. Instead of the matter being quietly settled between brothers X and Y themselves in a godly and spiritual way, it is carried by these tattlers over a whole country, and perhaps farther.

We have no sympathy with those who appear to find such a relish in retailing the faults of others. They have an eye for the ugly. If there is a black spot anywhere, they are sure to see it and point it out to everyone else. This is not the love that covereth a multitude of sins. It is one of the things that make not for peace, but for discord.

We ought therefore to discourage this circulation of evil reports by means of small talk. It would certainly tend to a spirit of concord among the saints, were there less of it.

Let us not repeat matters ourselves, nor listen to these scandal-mongers. Above all, if we are personally aggrieved, let us refuse to talk about our own grievances. For, if we are in the right, it is unnecessary to justify ourselves; and, if we are in the wrong, it is, to say the least, waste of time to attempt to do so.

And surely we ought not to forget ourselves so much as to say such things for the sake of exposing another's faults. This would be doing the work of an enemy at once, since it makes for division, not for peace. It certainly has the appearance of seeking to gain the hearers on our side, to be crying ourselves up, and running the other man down. And it is idle to pretend the matter is settled, and that we have forgiven the one who did the wrong, when we are all the while proclaiming his sins from the housetop.

May we remember the Lord's words, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly"—December, 1928)

BURDEN-BINDING ON THE SABBATH DAY

"They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew xxiii.4; read also xii.1-8)

Who was guilty of this? In intention the Pharisees were, when they found fault with the hungry disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day. The scanty meal would have been prevented, if they had had their way, and the disciples might have remained hungry. They were not allowed, however, to interfere, for the Lord defended His followers, as ever. Complaint would seem to have been made at this time direct to the Master about His disciples rather than to the disciples about their Master, as in chapter ix.11.

How clearly the Pharisees reveal their characteristic attitude of mind! The action that offended them was the "work" done in plucking the ears, and rubbing them in the hands to detach the corns from the ear, and the chaff from the corns, so that the grain might be separated for food.

AN ACT NOT LAWFUL, YET ITS DOERS GUILTLSS

So might any count it unlawful who fixedly ignored every other consideration save the legal prohibition to work. Consistency, they would feel, simply shut them up to apply it "as a principle" down to the smallest action that could be brought within the range of the commandment.

There were spices, indeed, which beaten small were the more fragrant when so offered to God, being typical of Christ's excellencies, perfect, intrinsic and all-pervading through His life and death (Exodus xxx.36; Leviticus xvi.12). But how can He be delighted with the small dust of self-righteousness in the unequal balances which the flesh has a double pleasure in using, firstly, for the gratifying of its own pride; and then for the unmerciful condemnation of others? Principles "beaten small" may become a real leaven, and give the Lord no pleasure.

Work on the sabbath day was forbidden. So the Pharisees condemn the negligible physical exertion* as transgression. They have no eyes to see the motions of the flesh in their own minds, darkened by self-righteousness, ready to bind a heavy burden on the poor and needy disciples. They would secure it on those shoulders with the cords of the law, but would not ease it with one of their fingers. No offer of food do they make: they give the stone of a "Thou shalt not" to those who need bread. And these needy ones? Well, they may make a virtue of their unsatisfied hunger.

CHRIST, HIS DISCIPLES' ADVOCATE (COMFORTER)

Yet, blessed be His Name, the Lord takes up the case on behalf of His disciples. He does not rebut the charge on humanitarian grounds in the first place, though this doubtless is not excluded.

Nor does He emphasise the obvious—the things *we* or the

*In terms of mechanical force it is doubtful if the work entailed in rubbing out the grain would be greater than in masticating it. Yet doubtless the Pharisees took *their* meals on the Sabbath day!

disciples themselves might have said in self-defence. Namely, that to call the rubbing between the hands "work" was a gross exaggeration. Unfortunately, in the circumstances, it was a necessary incident to their eating. Furthermore, that the law, in one of the numerous merciful provisions to be found there, expressly permitted (Deuteronomy xxiii.25) this very mode of sustenance, without a word to show that it did not apply on the sabbath day. The same books of Moses recorded a sabbath-day exception in the case of the manna. Mercy that gave in the wilderness a double portion of manna on the sixth day to secure both sabbath rest and food, raised no sabbath prohibition when the promised land was reached and the manna ceased, but prescribed for every day a ration for the needy.

All this might have been said, and said rightly, but the real point would have been missed.

THE LORD'S DEFENCE FROM SCRIPTURE

Now, as always, He makes a reply peculiarly His own for grace and wisdom. Turning aside for the moment from their particular accusation of sabbath-breaking, He speaks as though He took for granted their general one of unlawfulness. Then he brings the scripture to bear in its record of a parallel instance of need and unlawfulness. The Lord's anointed of an earlier day, David, and those that were with him had been hungry, and their hunger had been satisfied "unlawfully". A priest even had been the means. They had entered the house of God and eaten the shewbread, food reserved by law for the priests only. But though truly God's anointed, David was a fugitive and an outcast among his own people. When none gave to him in his need, it was then that he was fed "unlawfully". God took him up, and by His priest succoured him out of His own house and from His holy table. The man after God's own heart was hated and hunted: could he at such a time be refused the only bread God's house contained, hallowed though it might be?

The king (Saul) and people maintained the law and its

ordinances, yet rejected the man of God's choice. The breach of heart and spirit between them and God was plain from this rejection; what made them reverence His institutions? Certainly not love for HIMSELF; and it was under those conditions that the law gave way before the necessities of the Lord's anointed and His followers in that long past day.

On this sabbath day a similar reason justified a breach of the law: a *similar* reason, but not quite the same. For while David as well as his followers ate of the shewbread, it was only the disciples who now "transgressed". We may be sure if they were hungry, their Lord was hungry, too. Even so, doubtless He had meat to eat they knew not of. Besides, though He did not refrain from incurring the reproach of sabbath-breaking in the healing of others, may we not gather that He abstained purposely from giving any such occasion in respect of His own personal needs?

"Great David's greater son" was with them, and these needy ones were His retinue. His rejection accounts for the disciples' plight, while His presence and business for God, warrant the setting aside of graver restrictions than this of the Pharisees, as scripture testified in David's case.

THE EXALTEDNESS OF DISCIPLES' SERVICE

No real offence had been committed by the disciples, "unlawful" though their act might be, for the Lord says, "If ye had known . . . ye would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew xii.7). And this is fully confirmed by the forcible contrast of His further words, "the priests in the temple *profane* the sabbath, and are *blameless*" (verse 5).

The latter was no emergency as in David's case, but a perpetual sabbath obligation laid down by the law itself. They did not of course *really* profane the sabbath, though on a rigid application of the sabbath principle after the manner of the Pharisees, they undoubtedly did. All such straitened views, however, overlook that there are lesser laws and greater, and that the lesser must give way when the greater come into operation. The law of the temple, its requirements,

called for special and *increased* service on the sabbath. Then the shewbread was prepared (I Chronicles ix.32) and the continual burnt-offering was doubled (Numbers xxviii.9, 10), and this is not all. How could it be otherwise in His ordering Who delighted in His rest to come, and in the sacrifice which would make it sure? Such service, because it involved "work" did not desecrate the holy place, but rather the "work" was sanctified by the temple (Matthew xxiii.17). When the Lord therefore pronounces, "But I say unto you that there is here what is greater than the temple" (verse 6, N.Tr.), how tremendous is its significance!

He was there, the Son of the living God, His body being the true temple of God. As Jehovah, He had called priests and Levites to His service, and provided for their sustenance from His own tithes and offerings. So now, the disciples, whom He had called to be with Him, in following and serving Him performed a higher and holier service than the priests of the temple. If He appointed their sabbath-day food from their neighbours' standing corn, pressed out by their own hands, AND HE DID, they were blameless.

THE GOLDEN RULE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Their accusers would strain out the gnat of this technical sabbath-breaking, while they swallowed the camel of hatred to God and His Son. They found their conscience offended by this deduced irregularity, a consequence of faithful service to the Messiah; and the same conscience at the same time was completely insensitive to that governing, over-riding principle, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It might seem only a whisper in the intervals of the law's thunderings, but it expressed the heart of Jehovah in a day too early for the revelation that He is love, and that love is the fulfilling of the law.

LORD OF THE SABBATH

Quietly, almost imperceptibly, He declares Himself the Son of man. He had perhaps implied that He was the Son of David without expressing it. But though David's Son, He was David's Lord. As Son of man, His was a wider dominion than that of David's sphere of rule. Under His feet God will put all things; His kingdom is eternal and extends over all nations. All that affects mankind comes under His sway, not excepting the sabbath which was made for man. He gives His verdict on the question raised, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." His authority justifies His despised followers. The sabbath was made for their rest and not for their oppression. What rest is there for a man if hunger gnaws at his vitals?

The Son of man was full of loving care for all men even in their creature wants; how much more for those who suffered with Him? Had He not made it clear before stressing His authority, that the Pharisees' objection had only their own authority behind it, unsupported as it was by the law in which they boasted? Rebuke and instruction are combined for those who would have acted as though the disciples' hurt was of no account so long as the sabbath day was kept. They regarded man as made for the sabbath, and not the sabbath for man.

For our own learning let us not neglect to remark that the rebuke is given with pleading and lament. The Lord pleads, "Have ye not read?" (verses 3, 5) and laments, "If ye had known" (verse 7). And why lament? Because, alas, their ignorance was well nigh, if not quite, invincible, for it arose rather from the evil disposition of their hearts than from want of either reading or intelligence. They were truly zealous, even zealous for God, but not according to knowledge.

A ZEAL WITH A HISTORY

Let us also observe that this zeal for strict sabbath observance had a history. How the later prophets (Ezekiel xx.: xxii.8, 26; xxiii.38) had denounced the sin of the people in profaning the sabbath! How faithfully Nehemiah (chapter xiii.) after the captivity had corrected the abuse of it! At that time evidently it was a *sinful* profanation, because there was a wilful despising of God's ordinance in the selfish pursuit of business or pleasure (Isaiah lviii.13). It was right and commendable therefore in those cases to bring God's word to bear upon the national conscience.

Obsession with the right principle, however thus of old established and reinforced, blinded the Pharisees, so that they failed to recognise and acknowledge the whole, of which the detached act of the disciples was a part. What was that whole? The distinguished service of the Son of God. And so they put the part into a wrong category, and one of condemnation. Just as a post official might mistakenly surcharge an unstamped letter, through failing (or—if such a thing were possible—REFUSING) to see the official letters "O.H.M.S." printed on it. Even if the Pharisees had not clearly discerned who Jesus was, they would have been kept right if they had only taken to heart in what direction it was that the sovereign will of God set itself, namely, "I will have mercy" (to be shown by those who fear Him) "and not sacrifice" (from them). This was His golden rule. Divorced from this, the Pharisees' sabbath principle became one of stubble—no rule of God at all, but a contradiction of His mind.

No tradition is in question here, but that frailty of the human mind, sometimes counted by us as faithfulness and strength, which by excessive zeal for a principle, right enough in itself, only succeeds in distorting the truth. Its excess is denoted by the disregard of other indications of God's will in His word. Starting with their principle, its devotees subdivide, reduce, deduce, until it passes beyond all recognition of its proper wholesomeness and truth. All spiritual perspective is lost, and in the end so blind do such minds become that Christ Himself and His chosen twelve cannot escape their disapproval. The Pharisees might have had Nehemiah's
(concluded at foot of inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIII

SEPTEMBER 1965

No. 9

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecraig, Sydney N.S.W.

PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PRITMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST

According to the divine plan, if I am a member of the church at all, I am a member of the church everywhere. If I go to any quarter of the world where saints call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, I am a member, not by permission nor by courtesy, but by the universal recognition on the part of believers of the title which grace has given me. Baptised by the Spirit, I am a member of Christ's body, where-soever I may be.

In apostolic days that membership, and none other, was known throughout. There might be differences of view. There might be need of the word, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Some might eat herbs, and some might eat meat; but the Spirit said, and says, "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

Now the glory of God is identified, not with some, but with all the members of the body of Christ. If the weakest member, therefore, were excluded, save in case of necessary spiritual discipline, so far would the glory be forgotten or despised; and those guilty of such exclusion ought to be avoided, as causers of divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned.

From: "One Body and One Spirit", by W. Kelly.

"THERE IS ONE BODY, AND ONE SPIRIT, EVEN AS YE ARE CALLED IN ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING: ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM, ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS ABOVE ALL, AND THROUGH ALL, AND IN YOU ALL" (Ephesians ii,4-6).

JACOB WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN

III Jacob in Haran. Genesis xxix-xxxii

DURING JACOB'S SOJOURN in Haran, did his thoughts ever go back to the vision of Bethel?

We may feel sure that they must have done, and at times Jacob gives expression to his consciousness that God is blessing him. Yet it was on the whole a most unhappy time for Jacob. For God designs the *highest* blessing for His children, which consists in the enjoyment of fellowship with Himself. No outward prosperity, no providential deliverances, can take the place of this. But until Jacob had learnt how unholy his ways were, such fellowship was impossible. This hard lesson Jacob *began* to learn at Haran, chiefly through seeing, in his uncle Laban, what meanness and trickery could entail in unhappiness and suffering to others.

But first of all we are shown the beautiful scene of his meeting Rachel, and of his immediate love for her. The shepherds are brushed aside by Jacob, himself only a stranger there, in order that he may show this to her. Then, brought to her father Laban's home, he gladly undertakes to serve him for seven years to win her, "and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

The seal of divine approval on this story of human affection is unquestionable. Valuable it is for us to know it, in these days when everything is cheapened. The lesson, too, that true love can endure, and wait for its fulfilment is a salutary one.

Then, however, comes the first reaping of the bitter harvest Jacob had sown for himself. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." Jacob's seven years of service had been so valuable to Laban (chapter xxx. 27-30) that he schemes to gain another seven equally cheaply. So when the seven years are expired, and Jacob claims his bride, Laban substitutes Leah, poor sore-eyed Leah, for the beautiful Rachel. The parallel with Jacob's own deceitful substitution of himself for his brother, his father's beloved Esau, is startling. How exactly was Jacob's own measure meted out to him!

Yet it is well to note that in other respects Jacob's conduct was in no degree as bad as Laban's. For Jacob deceived

because he earnestly desired what was in itself good, and what he had sound reason to believe was his destined portion; while Laban heartlessly caused the deepest suffering to both his daughters, and to Jacob who had served him so faithfully, merely for material gain. Yet God's chastening falls upon Jacob, not Laban, and that because he *is* God's. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

When Jacob protests to his father-in-law about his trick, Laban puts forward the custom, which, if it existed, had not been mentioned before, that the elder sister must be married first. Then he reveals his scheme, promising to give to Jacob Rachel also a week later, in return for another seven years' service. It is often stated that Jacob had to wait another seven years for Rachel, but this was not the case. How easy it is to read the scriptures carelessly!

It was only to be expected that unhappiness would result from all this, and the endless friction and jealousy between Jacob's two wives (to say nothing of the two maidservants) brings out clearly the folly of departing from God's original ordinance as to marriage (Genesis ii. 24). Doubtless this is one reason why, in God's word, these things are recorded. Such departure of course, was only permitted by God, never approved of by Him.

But it may also be remarked that Jacob's evident neglect of Leah in favour of Rachel did not meet with God's approval, however natural it might have been (xxix. 30, 31). God demands conduct suitable to the relationship in which one stands to another, and it is the more needful to heed this when spontaneous love is lacking. "Husbands, love your wives," is God's *command*, however strange it may seem to some. And is it not the only possible way of healing an unhappy marriage? For the world's principle of "scrap it and try again with someone else," is usually a recipe for further disaster.

When the second seven year period had expired, Jacob asked Laban to release him, so that he might return to Canaan with his family, now containing eleven sons and one daughter. Laban demurred at this, for he said, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." He did not dispute Jacob's claim that the small flocks he once possessed were now

enormously increased, through Jacob's faithful care and God's blessing.

Jacob then agreed to continue his service to Laban, and to take certain of the flocks for his wages in future. But in this Laban thought he saw an opportunity of turning the bargain to his own advantage, and his meanness and duplicity are fully shown in the events that followed. Where was his natural love for his nephew, and the faithful husband of his daughters? Where was his gratitude for all the benefits Jacob had brought him? But then it is sad to see Jacob descending to Laban's level, and trying to match deceit with deceit (xxx. 31-43). How much better it would have been if he had confided in God. As it was, we cannot possibly suppose that it was Jacob's schemes which increased his flocks, but God's overruling providence. This too is plain from the dream which Jacob relates in chapter xxxi. (verses 10-12).

Repeatedly Laban changed Jacob's wages, as each new arrangement turned out to Jacob's benefit, not his own. But because Jacob failed to lean on God's goodness and power to bless him, he lost the enjoyment of this in his own soul. What a hard lesson this is for the believer to learn! From time to time Jacob acknowledged God's care of him, truly, yet throughout his sojourn in Haran the sense of God's nearness and His majesty—that which at Bethel had made Jacob a worshipper—seems completely absent.

RETURN TO CANAAN

Perhaps because Jacob, instead of being repelled by Laban's ways was in danger now of imitating them, God calls him to return. We ought not to suppose, that because God has once called us to follow a certain path, we must therefore remain in it indefinitely. While the restless spirit that is always seeking a change is to be avoided, yet at times a change is good, bringing us to fresh problems and exercises as well as fresh blessing and fresh opportunities for service.

Jacob's prosperity brings upon him the envy of Laban's sons, and Laban himself no longer regards him with favour. These things God uses to separate Jacob from that place. Then the Lord speaks to him: "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and

I will be with thee.” How striking that Canaan should be called “the land of thy fathers,” when as yet they owned none of it! Yet in God’s purpose it was already theirs.

God had promised His presence to Jacob, yet once again he could not rest in the enjoyment of all that this meant. He could see clearly enough the difficulties—Laban’s opposition, the possibility that Laban might use force to retain his daughters, and perhaps Jacob’s flocks and herds—yet who could harm him if God was with him? So like ourselves, he again plans to use his own devices, and without even a prayer to God he steals away while Laban is busy with sheep shearing. What human friend, who had promised his help, would put up with such treatment? Yet God’s love remains unchanged.

Then we read that Rachel had stolen her father’s images, or household gods. Does this imply a hankering after idolatry? Not necessarily; for the law of that country was that possession of these images by the daughter ensured for her husband the succession to her father’s property. This accords with Rachel’s and Leah’s words, “Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house?” Rachel, at any rate, would do her best to secure what she could! We can then understand Laban’s concern at the loss of these idols, and his pursuit of Jacob mainly to recover them.

We see then, that Jacob has to face Laban after all, and learns from *him* that God has once more intervened on his behalf, forbidding Laban to speak to him either good (i.e. to persuade him to return) or bad.

When Laban failed to discover the stolen teraphim, Jacob protested at the accusation that he had stolen them; and it is good to see his complete innocence, not only of the theft, but of any regard for the idols at all. Likewise he was able to protest his uprightness throughout his twenty years of service for Laban, and that in spite of Laban’s harsh dealing with him.

Thus in the end Laban has to make a covenant with Jacob, calling upon Jehovah to be witness between them when they parted. He uses the language of a believer, yet how utterly unreal his words were. How little difference God had made to Laban in his dealings with Jacob! Deprived of the protection of his own gods, Laban makes the covenant to ensure that

Jacob (who he knew would be true to it) would not seek to avenge himself on him, however powerful he might become. Of course nothing of this was in Jacob's mind.

As he set his face to go to the land of promise, did not his mind return to Bethel? For this was God's message to him when He bade him return: "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me" (xxxii. 13). Certainly he must have been glad to turn his back on Haran, yet his sojourn there had been the discipline of a faithful God, seeking to destroy what was base, and bring out all that was upright and true, in His chosen vessel.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

CHRIST'S SERVICE TO HIS OWN

(Read: John xiii. 1-13)

WE HAVE, IN John xiii., a beautiful proof of the constancy of the love of the Lord Jesus for His own. When it says, "He loved them unto the end" (verse 1) it means not simply to the end of a certain time, but that after all the proofs they had given of their unfaithfulness and slowness of heart to enter into things that seem to us perfectly plain, He still loved them.

LACK OF SYMPATHY

The Lord Jesus felt deeply in His heart their lack of sympathy with Himself. He is not only God, but He became truly a Man; and all that a man ought to feel, the Lord Jesus, Whose susceptibilities had never been dulled by sin, felt, as none of us can ever feel.

You know how He sought their sympathy in the garden, and said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me." He "sought for some to take pity but found none;" in His deep trouble, there were none in sympathy with Him. As He looked round on that little company (only twelve) at the table with Him, He said, "One of *you* shall betray Me;" and He took up the words of David when David's own particular friend had gone with Absalom—"He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me."

This quotation is an illustration of what we have in Peter—"No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation"

(2 Peter i. 20). The words in the first place were spoken of David's false friend; but to limit their meaning to this would be to make them of private interpretation. The Spirit of Christ looked on to Judas, while speaking of Ahithophel. All this the Lord Jesus felt keenly; but "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end," though one was about to betray Him; and the others, not only to flee from Him, but (worse, far worse) be stumbled because of Him that night. There was in their hearts disappointment of all their hopes of the promised Messiah. "We believed that it was He which should have redeemed Israel."

UNCHANGING LOVE FOR HIS OWN

The Lord Jesus is brought before us as the One Whose love never breaks down, though after all He knows of us, and all we know ourselves to be, we might expect He would give us up; but not so: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

There is nothing that will keep us in practical godliness like this. We are apt to excuse ourselves for all we do, and go through much with unexercised consciences; but that would not be if we realised the Lord Jesus takes cognizance of all. If we show lack of love to Him, it is not a matter of indifference to the Lord Jesus. He is occupied with us from the moment we turned from Him, and there is nothing about us in which He is not interested; and there is not one intention we might wish to carry out, and do not, that the Lord Jesus does not notice. He thus appeals to our hearts. He is up there, while we down here are often filling our hearts with the base things of this world; and He desires the love of our hearts to return to Him.

This chapter opens with two things. The time had come for Judas to betray Him, and the time had come for Him to go back to the Father. The disciples had had Him with them; they had lacked nothing. As long as He was with them, no persecution could touch them, but now they were to be alone, that is, without His bodily presence.

THE TOWEL-GIRDLE

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He

riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." There was the proof of what was in the heart of one of His disciples; he was about to betray Him; and on the part of the Lord Jesus there was the knowledge that everything was His, and that He was going to God. The less dignity a man has in the world, the more careful he is of it. The king would not mind speaking to any one of us here, because his dignity is so great, it would be unaffected by it; but one who had made money and recently acquired a position might feel his dignity endangered by having to do with us.

The Lord Jesus stoops to do the lowliest and most unpleasant service—to wash their feet. Supper time had come. If a man had guests, he would call in a slave to wash the guests' feet before supper; and the Lord Jesus Himself condescends to perform this gracious service.

They thought they were going to lose the Lord Jesus; instead, they were going to be His care in a special way. He was beginning this special service. On the face of this, we have the lesson of humility; but that is not all. His words to Peter (verse 7) show that. The lesson of humility was apparent to all then; but we have in this the service the Lord Jesus is engaged in now. He gives attention to our walk, and washes us with water, and keeps us in a condition in accord with the place to which He has brought us.

Now the Lord Jesus has brought us to God; He has brought us in to share the place of children, as sons before the Father. The Lord Jesus has been to the cross for us. It was not that which He meant when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He went to the cross to prepare us for the place. His blood-shedding has made us fit for heaven, and His being there has prepared heaven for us. Now he maintains us in a suitable condition according to the place to which His death has brought us.

CLEANSING BY BLOOD AND BY WATER

Two things we equally need: washing from our sins in the blood of Christ, and another washing—by the water of the word. It is puzzling to young Christians, because the word "washing" has two different meanings. The Lord Jesus came by water and by

blood. In Him is the answer to two things—to our *guilt*, and to our *defilement*. Not only were we guilty sinners before God, and therefore deserving of His condemnation; but we were defiled. The source, the spring, of all our thoughts, words, and ways is defiled. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, etc. I cannot draw near to God unless my sins are atoned for.

When the soldier pierced the side of the Lord Jesus, out came blood and water. But in his Epistle John reverses it—"by water and blood." "Not by water only" he is careful to add, because the blood is of the deepest importance. But the order is reversed, because while it is only on the ground of the blood I can go into the presence of God, the apostle is writing to Christians, and we all know the thing that troubles us most is the defiled nature that works, and works, and keeps on working. The answer to that is the word of God.

When the word of God first lays hold of the conscience, what does it do? Perhaps long before the man is brought into peace about his sins, it makes him uncomfortable in all he once delighted in. This is the first action of the word of God, which is compared in scripture to a man getting into a bath—not washing hands and feet, but having the whole body washed. So in Hebrews x. 22 we "draw near, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The word of God has separated us from the defilement which was ours.

PRACTICAL CLEANSING

So when we speak of cleansing by blood, it means cleansing from the guilt of sin in the sight of God. If that was not perfect, we should never be fit for His presence; but the washing of water by the word is practical cleansing. When the word of God washes you from that which is defiling it cleanses, as in Psalm cxix. 9. We are brought out in practical separation from that evil which once held us.

But this being done once for all, there is the contraction of defilement in this world. In the Old Testament, a man was defiled who happened to touch a bone, or a dead body, or if a man fell dead in the tent where he was (Numbers xix.). It was not his fault, but he was defiled. You may hear language you

loathe to hear, or an evil tale that gets into the neighbourhood, yet you are defiled by it, because there is that in you which answers to it; and it will come up again and again, and just when you wish it far from you.

There is also defilement for which we *are* responsible. But we, in either case, are defiled. There is no excuse for a Christian sinning. Christ is the standard, and all that does not come up to Him we ought to judge. If temptation is working in my own heart, it is sin, and defiling too; but because we are what we are, we are the objects of the unceasing care of the Lord Jesus. And what carefulness it would work in us, if, when we do trifling things, we remember they are not trifling to the Lord Jesus, but that He is occupied with us about those very things. He has become a Servant for ever, and stoops down to be occupied even with our feet.

FEET-WASHING ESSENTIAL

Peter was astonished at the grace and humility of the Lord Jesus, and said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me."

There are defiling things that come into our lives, and hinder our communion with the Lord Jesus. Now He uses His word by bringing it to act on our conscience, so that we may wake up and judge in His presence the things we lack.

When Peter heard he could have no communion with Christ, if He did not wash his feet, he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And the Lord takes occasion to show him that the bathing is not repeated, as He says in John xv. 3, "Ye are clean," for Judas had gone out. Without exception, "Ye are clean through the word." That did not need repeating. They were brought out from their defilement, and that work never needs doing again.

In the Old Testament, the priest, when he was consecrated, was bathed; but as he wrought his service, and came from the altar of burnt offering to offer incense, he had to cleanse himself from defilement—not to get into a bath, but to wash his hands and feet. So we are to draw near, with true heart, bringing our words and ways into the light of the word of God, and so draw near with practical cleansing.

We feel how weak we are, and ready to stray, and what constant need of watchfulness we have; but how blessed for us to know the Lord Jesus is occupied with us, with the object of maintaining us in practical holiness. And we have in Scripture these assurances of the love of the Lord Jesus for the comfort and attraction of our hearts. Do we not gladly own He is worthy of devotedness of heart and service from us? His heart is ever engaged with us. We are waiting for the moment when He will come and claim us. How will He find us? If we knew for certain He was coming tonight—let us be honest in His presence—is there anything we would like to alter in our lives before He comes? If it is so, He is the One Who looks on us as those washed, cleansed from our sins, bought with His precious blood: surely it is due for us to answer to His love! May the consciousness of that love cause us to cleave to Him with more purpose of heart!

G. F. COX

EAGLES' WINGS

“Ye have seen . . . how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself” (Exodus xix. 4)

THIS WAS PART of the first message which Moses received for the people of Israel when they arrived at Mount Sinai. The beautiful image used to express God’s care for the people was no doubt very appropriate to the natural surroundings in which the tents had been pitched. The people had come three months’ journey, the last part of which was among mountains and through passes which gradually led them higher and higher until they had come at length to the lonely grandeur of Mount Sinai. The eagle is a denizen of such places and builds its nest amongst the loneliest and loftiest crags which are only reached by its broad and powerful wings.

Surely this was a fit emblem of the way in which the people of Israel had come their long journey. A stronger arm than that of Moses had supplied their needs; a wiser one than he had been their guide; for unseen, there had been underneath them all the way, sustaining and protecting, the mighty power and the unceasing love of Jehovah their God.

Why had these people been favoured so? If they never knew it before they would understand now that it was that they might be brought to Jehovah. "I have brought you unto Myself," he says to them. They had often thought no doubt that God had come down to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt because of their miserable state and the groanings which had been wrung from them there. Those who thought so read the same lesson of God's love to them in all that had happened since their deliverance. This was all true, but there was something better still. All their experiences God designed should be to bring them to the knowledge of Himself. He would have, amidst the idolatry of the nations, a people on earth who knew Him, and it was for this blessing that He had brought them that marvellous way up into the mountain tops, there to reveal Himself to them still more nearly, more openly.

Had we eyes to see we should find the same eagles' wings beneath each one of us, bearing us ever upwards to the place where we may learn more of God Himself. We often think of our circumstances in the light of our own blessing and comfort; God would have us think deeper than that, and see in all that occurs in our lives, opportunities of learning of Himself. We have been brought to a place where we may learn of Him in the fullest and best way—in the face of Jesus Christ. But every day there are opportunities of experiencing how He is bringing us closer to Himself in the things that befall us.

May we have grace to rejoice in the knowledge that we are borne along to such a blessed conclusion by those strong eagles' wings which never swerve from the path of divine purpose.

"And now in perfect peace we go
 Along the way He trod,
 Still learning from all need below
 Depths of the heart of God."

L. C. HOCKING

THE LITTLE MAID AND GEHAZI

IN 2 KINGS V. 2 the Spirit of God states that the Syrians had gone out by companies and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's

wife. What volumes are condensed by a master hand into those simple statements!

In the first place, how is it that the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for an inheritance was subject to such indignity? Real faith, that always honours God, gives Him credit for having a very good reason for allowing such a state of things. Thus Daniel "sets his heart to understand" in the midst of most disconcerting circumstances. A believing remnant in a later day is to see "the abomination that makes desolate, standing where it ought not," and in the obedience of faith is to "flee to the mountains."

Can one conceive of more trying circumstances for a little maid than to be brought away captive by a band of her country's enemies, and to find herself a slave in the household of a great man of these hostile hordes? Surely her little heart must often have been near breaking when she thought of her parents, her home, her friends and above all her God. Yet with the simplicity of a God-honouring faith she gives Him credit for knowing what He is about, and she can even concern herself with the welfare of her master and owner. "Would God my lord was with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy."

How perfectly beautiful, and what a God-honouring crisis resulted from her simple testimony! What an object lesson for those who are inclined to doubt God's goodness in less painful circumstances! The Lord Himself refers to the resultant miracle when He says in Luke iv. 27, "There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Eliseus the prophet, but none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian." The little maid had been the simple instrument in God's hands for the display of the magnificence of His grace to the Gentile oppressor.

What callous indifference to God and what was due to Him we find in the case of Gehazi! A servant of the prophet in question, and surrounded with circumstances calculated to impress him with God's honour and glory, he says with a selfish disregard for every righteous claim, "As the Lord liveth, I will run after him and take somewhat of him."

In view of this sordid tarnishing of the glory of God's grace,

creating the impression that after all God was prepared to be debtor to man, well might the prophet say, in indignant condemnation, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments and olive yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?"

May the Lord give such a sense of Himself as will enable our hearts to respond in that simple faith which enables Him to come forth in the display of His matchless grace. May we honour and not dishonour Him.

G. S. PURNELL

"SO ALSO IS THE CHRIST"

(Note on I Corinthians xii.12)

In this remarkable phrase, the Spirit of God expresses the unity of the body of Christ (I Corinthians xii.27) with the Head in glory. The unity is so ultimate that the whole organic, spiritual formation is described as "the Christ".

The figure used in the previous part of the verse (12) is that of the human body: "for even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ" (N.Tr.).

The figure, as it is thus applied to the church, sets out a profound truth and a living and abiding reality, resulting from the operation of the Spirit of God. The saints upon earth consist of numerous and diverse "members", bound together and co-ordinated to constitute a single "body", all having been in the power of the one Spirit baptised into it (verse 13). Not only so, they are also by that same Spirit closely bound up and united with Christ the Head. It is this spiritual "man", consisting of the living and life-giving Head and His body, which is called "the Christ" in verse 12. We read in Ephesians ii.15,16, both of "the one new man" and the "one body".

W. J. Hocking

(From "The Bible Monthly, December 1935)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIII

OCTOBER 1965

No. 10

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto.

Australia: B. LICELEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecrag, Sydney N.S.W.

PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PETTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

SANCTIFIED UNTO OBEDIENCE

WE ARE not put on the ground of doing things merely because we think them right. If we desired or sought to do right simply because we thought the thing right, we should be always wrong. The only true principle for a Christian is obedience. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ. It is the very life-breath of the new nature. It is what was found in perfection in Christ, and God now calls us to walk as *He* walked.

Assuredly there is immeasurable distance between the perfection of Christ's walk and our walk; but this is certain, that we are bound to go forward in the same direction. The Lord may and does distance us, but we are bound to be on the same road. We are called to direct our faces to the same heaven, and we are bound to go onward, according to the measure of our strength, after *Him*, not away from *Him*.

This is what is implied in being sanctified unto His obedience. God has given us to see its perfection in Christ, but He has set us in the very same path; as He said Himself, "Follow Me".

W.K.

(continued from inside back cover)

not named in this passage, which is occupied with God's work FOR US, and APART FROM US; with what is EXTERNAL rather than INTERNAL.

What solid assurance this scripture affords us while enduring the pressure of circumstances contrary to our renewed nature! God is controlling all these complex things for our present benefit, and in accordance with His righteousness revealed in the gospel. The issue is certain; the "hope of glory" in which we exult will be fulfilled for us, and throughout the earth, "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah xxxii.17).

EXTRACT

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XXXVI. At table with Jesus

"Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with Him"

(John xii.2).

It is *the living* who praise God.

In one of his prayers to God for deliverance from trouble which seemed likely to overwhelm him, David exclaims: "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" (Psalm lxxxviii.10). And again (cxv.17) "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence". In his thanksgiving for recovery from severe sickness, king Hezekiah expressed the same thought (Isaiah xxxviii.18-19) "For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day".

Around the table at Bethany, where the Lord Jesus was entertained during the week preceding His suffering and death at Calvary, there was a man whom He had recovered from death itself. This home was the one place we know of where He was sure to be the honoured Guest. A small company of three, a family, were delighted to have Him in their midst. Of the two sisters, Martha is mentioned as serving, and Mary — probably the more perceptive spiritually — anointed His feet with spikenard, very costly. Their brother Lazarus also was there, though nothing beyond the fact of his being at the table is noted. Will anyone say that his presence, in silence maybe, did not add to the joy which this gathering of devoted hearts must have given to the Lord Jesus?

The preceding chapter (John xi.) records how Lazarus came to be competent to share in the worship of the Bethany family. He had been dead, and as the Lord, together with the sisters and a concourse of Jews, gathered round the opened tomb,

there could scarcely fail to be the exhalations of corruption which are ever the noxious outcome of sin's penalty (verse 39). But the "Resurrection and the Life" had arrived on the scene, and at His word of command the dead had come forth, bound hand and foot, needing to be set at liberty by the ministrations of his fellows. Lazarus was alive from among the dead!

How amazed the onlookers must have been as they watched that figure, clad in graveclothes, come forth from the tomb at the bidding of the Son of God! Little less must have been the wonder of Lazarus himself. Can we not picture him, when the napkin about his face had been removed, looking back into the grave from which he had just emerged, and saying to himself if not to those around him, "Have I come from there?" And later, as he sat at table with Jesus in the home at Bethany, could he fail to recall the miracle of what had been done for him? If no utterance of thanksgiving from his lips is recorded, can there be any doubt that his heart joined in the family's tribute to his Saviour?

The experience of Lazarus, unique in the scripture record by reason of the physical circumstances that attended it, is a pattern of that which takes place spiritually in the case of every believer. Those from among the sons of men who hear the voice of the Son of God receive eternal life (John v.24), and the believer has only to look around him to behold the spiritual death from which he himself has been delivered. Truly, as Paul declares, "in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians ii.2,3). How glad we are to acknowledge the truth of what follows: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ . . ." (verses 4,5 et seq.).

The believer may well exclaim with the Psalmist: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? . . . I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people" (cxvi.12-14). It is becoming for us individually to thank the Lord for His daily mercies: it is incumbent upon us also to meet with the Lord's people so that collectively praise and worship may be offered to Him from whom, and through whom, all blessings flow.

Far be it from us to censure those who, when assembled for worship in the presence of the Lord Himself (Matthew xviii.20), have no audible word of thanksgiving for Him who is the worthy Centre of the gathering. Nevertheless we do suggest that silences which deprive the Lord of what is due to Him, which quench the Spirit, and deaden the worship of those who have met together for what can only be a corporate act, are indefensible.

Lazarus was not a colourful figure such as Peter, John or Andrew. But his heart beat true to his Saviour, and his presence at the table in Bethany was eloquent of his devotion. May we ourselves not fail, either audibly or in silence, to give to the Lord Jesus what He seeks from those who owe their life and all else to Him.

How pleasant is the sound of praise!
 It well becomes the saints of God:
 Should we refuse our songs to raise,
 The stones might tell our shame abroad.

For Him Who washed us in His blood
 Let us our sweetest songs prepare;
 He sought us wandering far from God,
 And now preserves us by His care.

(T. KELLY)

E. A. PETTMAN

THE THOUGHT OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you”

(James iv.8)

HERE IS A STATEMENT made with divine authority. It is a call, as from the very gates of heaven, to the twelve scattered tribes that once were a mighty people gathered under “the wings of the LORD God of Israel”. It is a divine invitation, and, as such, it came to Jewish Christians, in a difficult day, as a practical exhortation adequate to garrison them against errors and weaknesses characteristic of those times of emergence from Jewish practices.

In our own time, with its own difficulties — and weaknesses — it is a challenge as well as an invitation — an exhortation as well as a warning. For who will draw near who is near already?

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” — in whatsoever state, without ritual or preparation, without human mediation or ceremony — only **DRAW NEAR**, for it is the only condition laid down by God Himself upon which He will draw near to His creature. He makes no demands, He exacts no promises; there is no elaborate vicarious approach, but “whosoever will, let him come”. There is in these words a **WELCOME** as wide as eternity.

To those of us who have had the experience of drawing near, there is an hour and a place in the past to which we are prone to retreat. It was in that place of pause in our span of time that we took our first feeble steps, and so knew the reality of drawing near to God.

It was a “drawing near” for reconciliation — for we knew we were, in reality, far away. There is a moving record of this approach in Genesis xlv. A retrospect of our own experience may be seen there. The brethren of Joseph were in his presence — and he, **UNKNOWN** to them. They stood, in

fear, before him — they were not NEAR to him. Famine strode through the land hand in hand with death, and, reluctantly, they were driven to crave life from the great potentate of Egypt whom Pharaoh had named Zaphnath-pa-aneah, Prince of the Life of the World. They sought to buy that which is beyond price! Double money was in their hands, and they offered a present of the fruits of the land of famine “a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts and almonds” (Genesis xliii.11), but the prayer of their father was more suited to their need — it is as Israel, not as Jacob, that he prays, “God Almighty give you *mercy* before the man”.

So did we come, as others came, fortifying ourselves with the slender fruits of our tainted land, and fearful of the famine aftermath of life. And as we drew near, our plea changed, as did that of the men of that far day.

No longer did they say “We are true men”, but “they said one to another, We are verily GUILTY . . . and they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter”. Each for himself, with memory’s aid, may fill in the details of a personal past. The approach was being made, and we may recall the interpreter, who sought to make the pathway clearer still, but we had not yet drawn NEAR. It is Judah who takes the *nearer* step (Genesis xliv.): “Judah CAME NEAR unto him, and said, O my lord, let thy servant. I pray thee, speak a word in my lord’s ears”. It is as SURETY for the life of Benjamin that Judah draws near. He offers himself that Benjamin may be free. It is this appreciation of the reality of suretyship, and the taking up of the consequences of that undertaking, that releases the pent up floods of Joseph’s love. So with ourselves, if we look back, there came that moment when we saw ourselves before the dread Presence, and knew that, without a Surety to stand for us — to take the place of forfeiture on our behalf — we could never know the nearness of security and peace.

The thought is here in human types, but the retrospect of the believer takes him again to the glorious reality of being “made nigh by the blood of Christ”. Judah is taken up into the portrayal of the Blessed One who did not flinch from his

undertaking of suretyship, and so deeply satisfied the longing of that restrained affection that tears are in the eyes of the Mighty One as, at last, he is rightly enabled to draw them to himself. "COME NEAR TO ME, I pray you. And they came near" (Genesis xlv.4). There is such touching simplicity in the words. Their guilt acknowledged, the Surety in their midst, "there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren". Even the interpreter is gone! It is HIMSELF alone.

There is a divine progression in this word "Draw near to God". It is well to remember that there is nothing static in divine things. The thought of stagnation is associated with human failure — it has no place with God. "They were troubled at his presence (Ch.xlv.3), but he draws them to him to unfold the purposes of grace which had abounded far beyond the hatred and sin they had admitted. "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life . . . to save your lives by a great deliverance". There are no recriminations — no recalling of the past with emphasis on their sin. "Ye *sold* me . . . God did *send* me" — it is the divine answer to the sin of the world.

It is grace, indeed, to give life where life was forfeit, but divine progression goes beyond. "And he kissed all his brethren . . . and after that his brethren talked with him" (verse 15). In the Day that surely comes — the Eternal Day when we shall know, even as we are known — the wealth of His great love, eternal in its inception as in its prolongation, will flow out inexhaustibly to ALL his brethren. The sons of the handmaid with the sons of wedlock will be drawn near in common faith to know the kiss of His pardon, the embrace of His welcome, and that uninterrupted communion with Himself of which He has assured us in spiritual presentations, as in His own words, "THOU SHALT DWELL IN THE LAND . . . AND THOU SHALT BE NEAR UNTO ME".

EDWARD T. WOOD

(To be continued)

JACOB, WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN

IV. *The Meeting with Esau, and Return to Bethel.*

(Read: Genesis xxxii.—xxxv.15)

AS SOON AS JACOB approached the promised land, one thought began to fill his mind — he must again meet Esau, the brother whom he had wronged, from whose wrath he had fled to Haran.

Had his twenty years' absence caused his brother to forget his enmity, or was he only biding his time to take revenge? In all probability Jacob had heard of Esau's prosperity, for news was regularly carried by merchant caravans in those days, but no news could reach him of Esau's attitude to himself.

“And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim (i.e. Two armies)”.

What a striking example this is of God's ways with His children! Well He knew the thoughts that troubled Jacob. and *before* Jacob received the message that was to distress him, *before* he thought of invoking God's help, God sent His angels to assure Jacob that in the ensuing meeting with Esau he would not be alone. The angels he had seen in his dream ascending and descending the ladder, were now sent as a protecting host.

Jacob calls the place “Two armies”, by which he seems to mean his own and God's, for he uses the same word in verses 7 and 10 (translated “bands”), and he had not yet heard of Esau's force. But, alas, he does not seem to understand God's gracious reassurance, and he has no word of gratitude for it.

Instead, he sends a message to Esau in abject terms, and gets the reply that Esau is coming to meet him, and, adds the messenger, four hundred men with him. He is greatly afraid and distressed at this, yet what were Esau's four hundred men, compared with the angelic host? Why did he not re-

member God's message when he received Esau's?

Characteristically Jacob makes his own arrangements to meet the emergency, and *then* turns to God in prayer. Every believer can understand the mistake in all this, yet how often we imitate Jacob!

He divides his company and his flocks and herds into two, with the despairing reflection that at least one might escape, if Esau destroyed the other. When he prays, he reminds the Lord of His promises of blessing, and this was right. If God had promised to multiply his seed, how could He allow Esau to destroy them? Yet Jacob failed really to trust God, and so lost the peace which only trust can give. He took account of everything except God's faithfulness. If we must reason, let us bring God in, and conclude that He cannot fail to make good His word.

However, we must not pass on from Jacob's prayer without noting his confession, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant". Here is a proof that he had not been in God's school for nothing: this is what the godless man never says.

Next Jacob's tortured mind suggests another expedient, and he arranges to send before him a large present from his flocks and herds, in successive droves, which might soften Esau's heart. But all his fevered planning cannot calm his fears, and he rises up in the night and sends his whole family over Jabbok, himself remaining alone. This action is often seen as a cowardly shielding of himself, yet Esau was not near, and when he did arrive Jacob goes forward first to meet him (xxxiii.3). Was it not rather that the ferment in his mind compelled him to seek solitude? But it was *then* that God met him.

Who was it that wrestled with Jacob in the darkness? Hosea speaks of "the angel", and Jacob says, "I have seen God face to face". Doubtless it was an angel, through whom God would deal with Jacob, crippling his reliance on his own strength and wisdom, to replace it with a real confidence in

Himself. We notice that the angel wrestled with Jacob, not Jacob with the angel; yet Jacob refused to give way, till the angel put his hip out of joint. Then at last, Jacob was changed from a wrestler into a suppliant — typical of the change in his attitude which this experience was to bring about in him.

“I will not let Thee go except thou bless me”, he now says, and the angel’s response is to ask him his name, and to announce that he is no longer to be called Jacob—the supplanter, but Israel — a prince of God. A similar change must take place in every one of God’s children — first the implanting of a new life, a new nature, and then the working out of that new life till the whole man is transformed.

This entire experience took place in the darkness, and terminates at dawn, the angel refusing to reveal his own name. God thus as yet hides Himself from Jacob. Contrast with this God’s appearing to Abraham, and communing with him (Genesis xviii.), saying “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?” Jacob was not yet ready for such communion, but the limp he was left with (xxxii.31) was a constant reminder to him of the angel’s words: “As a prince thou hast power *with God* and with men, and hast prevailed”.

Yet Jacob was slow, as we all are, to apply the lessons God was teaching him. So accordingly the next day sees the man whom God had hailed as a prince, grovelling in the most servile way before Esau.

He passes over in front of his family, and bows low seven times as he approaches his brother, but Esau runs to meet him and embraces him affectionately, the past all forgotten. This should have removed Jacob’s fears, but he seems incapable of trusting the man whom he had wronged, measuring Esau by his own crooked nature.

Esau declines Jacob’s present, yet Jacob insists on his receiving it, as though to ensure a continuance of this unexpected goodwill. We cannot but feel what an unpleasant contrast Jacob is to his attractive brother; yet what is merely natural will perish, and as we have seen, Esau had no relish for divine things. But Jacob, suspicious and underhanded as

he shows himself here, was nevertheless being transformed.

Esau next suggests their travelling together to Seir, but Jacob's fear is renewed at this proposal, and he makes an excuse for going on alone. He says, "Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord to Seir". Likewise he declines Esau's offer of some of his men to protect him. Then as soon as Esau has gone, Jacob goes in almost the opposite direction, to Succoth. Alas, Jacob is still a deceiver. Who would not despair of him? And have we not often had to despair of ourselves, when a sin we imagined we had conquered again defeats us? Yet, blessed be God, He does not give us up, nor did He Jacob.

At Succoth he builds a house, as though forgetting he was to be a pilgrim in the land of promise. Later he journeys to Shechem (Sychem in Acts vii.16), which is perhaps the Sychar of John iv., where Jacob's well was. Jacob pitches his tent next to the city, whether for purposes of trade, or for greater security, we do not know. Certainly he bought a piece of ground, where later Joseph was buried (Joshua xxiv.32), and there he erects an altar, calling it El-elohe-Israel, i.e. God, the God of *Israel*.

Plainly Jacob is here recalling his wrestling with the angel, and his worship — for an altar always implies worship — is to the God who had there bestowed his new name. Thus did he own God's dealing with him, and perhaps gave thanks for God's deliverance from Esau. But we may question whether God Himself, in His own glory and majesty, was yet in his thoughts. We may judge, too, from the fact that he himself is still invariably called Jacob, that he was not yet living in the power of his new name.

The next chapter (xxxiv.) detailing the deceit and violence of Simeon and Levi, shows us the low standard of conduct prevailing in Jacob's family, and it is sadly true that Jacob's eight eldest sons all brought grief to their father by their

wicked ways, quite apart from their treatment of Joseph. Could we imagine such doings in Abraham's household, of whom God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment"? And here Jacob seems more concerned at the danger of vengeance from the surrounding people, than at the dishonour to God's name (verse 30).

It is at this point that God speaks again to Jacob: "Arise, go up to Bethel, and *dwelt there*: and make an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother".

Jacob gladly responds to this call, coming as it did when his heart was depressed with the sense of failure and shame; but he now realises how unworthy both he and his family were to come to "God's house". We hear of idols, which Jacob must have known of before, but until now was not exercised about. It is only by living in the consciousness of God's presence that we can discern what is worthy of Him, and what is unworthy.

Now he calls his household to put away their idols and be clean, and change their garments, and "let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went". His chief concern now is with what is suitable to God's house, and he forgets his danger from the people around. He buries the idols and the earrings (these seem to have an idolatrous meaning), and as they journey, God takes care of His servant's safety.

So they come to Bethel, and Jacob builds his altar. He calls the place El-Bethel, i.e. the God of Bethel — the God whom he had then begun to know, who had shown Himself true to the revelation He had given of Himself, whose word had been so abundantly fulfilled. It is God Himself — "Patient, gracious, powerful, holy" in the words of the hymn, who is now before Jacob's soul. Accordingly, God appears to him, not just in a dream, nor in the darkness of the night,

and blesses him. He also confirms Jacob's new name. He says, "Thy name is Jacob", for hitherto he had not shown himself as Israel. Then "Thy name shall not any more be called Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name".

Further, what He had earlier promised Jacob (xxviii.13,14) He now bestows as a *blessing* to him: "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins".

So Jacob sets up a second pillar at Bethel, pours oil on it, and also pours a drink offering thereon. He again names it Bethel, but no longer is the house of God associated with dread in his mind. How far had he come! Yet God had much more to teach him, much more blessing to bestow, though through deeper sorrows than any he had yet known.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

GOD'S GOLDEN CHAIN

-(Read: Romans viii.29-30)

THE "sufferings of this little while" are linked with God's purposes from all eternity. And in these verses we perceive the golden chain which unites the eternity of the past with the eternity to come. "For whom He foreknew, He also predetermined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the Firstborn among many brethren. But whom He predetermined, them also He called, and whom He called, them also He justified, and whom He justified, them also He glorified" (verses 29,30 W.K.).

There are five links in this golden chain of the righteousness of God, Whose purpose is to introduce "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii.13); (i) foreknowledge; (ii) predestination; (iii) calling; (iv) justification; and (v) glorification, or conformity to the image of His Son. The "calling" which is mentioned in the previous

verse (28), is the central point, being preceded by foreknowledge and predestination, and succeeded by justification and glorification.

Such is the masterly outline of the divine scheme, the ultimate outcome of which is glory according to the pattern of God's Son for those who "come short of the glory of God" (Romans iii.23). And in this "creation" defiled by the presence of sin, and "made subject to vanity", God "calls" those who shall partake of that glory. And this immutable, never-failing plan is unfolded in this passage not for mere intellectual pleasure, but for the comfort of those who are "suffering for righteousness' sake".

It must be carefully borne in mind that PERSONS are the subject of the passage. The truth of it applies to those who are the "called", and to no others. In Chapter xi.2. the people or nation of Israel is in question, but here individuals.

THE FIVE LINKS

(i). FOREKNOWLEDGE is God's omniscience in respect of certain ones, who individually were before His eternal mind and known by Him each from the other. (ii) PREDESTINATION is God's determination beforehand with respect to those certain ones whom He foreknew. According to this perfect foreknowledge, God fore-ordained them to be conformed to the pattern or image of the One in Whom is His delight — His Son; and when the "many sons" are brought to glory, He will be "the Firstborn among many brethren". (iii). CALLING is the gospel invitation made effective in those that are fore-known and predestined. (iv). JUSTIFICATION is God's act of regarding the called as righteous before Him on the basis of the propitiation of Christ Jesus. (v). GLORIFICATION is the final act of grace upon the justified, when even their bodies will reflect the glory of Christ. It is then that those who "come short of the glory of God" in creation attain to the glory of His grace and redemption.

Sanctification, which is the work of the Spirit *within us*, is

(continued at foot of inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIII

NOVEMBER 1965

No. 11

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto

Australia: B. LICKLEY, 58, Sunnyside Crescent, Castledraig, Sydney N.S.W.

PRICE FIVEPENCE

May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. PEYMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

THE SONG OF MOSES

(Read: Exodus xv.)

The morning dawn revealed one of the most memorable spectacles of history. The nation of slaves, fleeing from their masters, had suddenly become a nation of freemen, and stood emancipated upon the shores of a new continent. The proud people, which for generations had inflicted such untold griefs upon them, had suffered a humiliation from which it would take them generations to recover. The chivalry of Egypt was overwhelmed in the midst of the sea, there remained not so much as one of them left; and all along the shore lay the bodies of the dead, cast up from the depths of the tide. At this day a significant blank in the hieroglyphed memorials of Egypt tells the story of that overwhelming disaster. And there was given to Israel for all subsequent time an evidence of the trustworthiness of God, which compelled belief, not only in their great Deliverer, but in His servant Moses.

And from that ransomed host, congregated there in one vast throng, broke forth an anthem, whose sublime conceptions of language rendered it worthy of the occasion, as it has been the model of triumphal songs in all subsequent times.

There is no thought of any but the Lord throughout the entire piece. The song was sung to Him and of Him. It was HE that had triumphed gloriously, and cast horse and rider into the sea. It was HIS right hand that had dashed in pieces the enemy. It was because HE blew with His wind, that they sank as lead in the mighty waters. It was through the greatness of HIS excellency that they were overthrown who had risen against Him. All the honours of the victory were reverently laid at HIS feet. Moses is not once referred to.

(Extracted)

“By Him (Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews xiii.15).

THE THOUGHT OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

(Continued)

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you”

(James iv.8)

Drawing near—in exhaustion

The roar of the multitude as “the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice,” the “sound of abundance of rain” sweeping in from the sea, the divine impetus that outstripped to the gates of Jezreel the leaping chariot of Ahab—these, and the waters of Kishon red with the blood of the prophets of Baal, were the panoramic memories of Elijah as the vicious threat of Jezebel reached him in his exhaustion.

The people had accepted his proposal. They had seen demonstration of the consuming fire of Jehovah. They had made their declaration, “The Lord, He is the God.” The responsibility, now, was their own. Yet none came to Elijah’s defence against the awful threat of the idolatrous queen, and the outcome of his labour for God’s people seemed loss.

Recurring in his mind with depressing persistence came the thought—like a taunt from the enemy—“I, even I *only*, am left; and they seek *my* life, to take it away” (I Kings xix.10). It was as though futility faced him, whichever way he turned, reiterating his *isolation* as a witness for his God. For it was the witness character that he valued—it was NOT JUST HIS LIFE—flickering to extinction—almost within the grasp of Jezebel, the Phoenician murderess. God might take away his life—and he laid it at His throne—but NOT Jezebel. So he “arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba”—to Abraham’s “well of the oath.”

At the outset of his service path, “the word of Jehovah came to him (I Kings xvii.2). Now he would draw near to the great AUTHOR Himself. He goes on alone—no human service can minister that which only divine Resource

can supply! So, at Beersheba he left his servant in comparative safety—for Beersheba belonged to Judah (I Kings xix.3)—but “he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness.” It is here that he brings before his God that sense of his weakness that leads ultimately to strength. For Elijah did not deal in platitudes—not for him were mere form and ceremony—his approach was to a Person. His very name, to which he remained true, means “My God is God *Himself*.” So does he, in his day of exhaustion and depression, DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

Before his time, and since his troubled day, men who “believed God” knew the path of human limit as Elijah knew it, but there has never been one such man, who, in drawing near to God, found no response from Him.

The first impulse of this approach brings a divine reaction. The preliminary steps, however faltering—even groping and misdirected—are supported, guided, divinely energised. To lay hold upon this truth is to enter into an experience of the divine Presence in beneficent power, while realising, for the first time, the abysmal weakness inherent in oneself. Thus it was in the helplessness of sleep—at the exhausted end of his human limit—that, “THEN an angel touched him” (verse 5). It was the contact of heaven with earthly man. God was drawing near to one whose weakening steps had drawn near to HIM. It was no dream; the touch was as real as the awakening. The voice was not unknown—he had heard it “by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan.” More than once he had heard it in direction, and in promise. It was the same Voice. Abram heard it in Ur of the Chaldees; Jacob, too, while the wagons waited at his door. A sleeping child in the temple heard and came to know it, for he, too, had drawn near “before the Lord” (I Samuel ii.18). “Arise and eat” (verse 5). The “cake baken on the coals and a cruse of water” were material evidences of the very Presence of the One who had marked his wilderness steps toward Horeb, and would confirm His aid by a second awakening touch “because the journey is too great for thee” (verse 7).

So, in our day, as in his long ago, the journey of drawing

near is one of progression—of movement onwards. It is too great for mere human achievement. The wisdom of man makes no advance. Weakness—realised and admitted—draws a strength that, once supplied, energises, beyond human understanding, until the Horeb of His Presence is reached.

In the strength of divine sustaining Elijah journeyed. Forty days passed through the hour glass of time—forty nights saw him pressing on—until, at last, the might and stability of “Horeb the mount of God” dwarfed the desert, and he drew near to the One who had spoken to Moses there—and would speak, even to him.

“And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him” (I Kings xix.9). He had sought the inner shelter of the Mount of Meeting. Not for him the climber’s exploit of surmounting the summit. He “lodged there” in the humility that characterises those who wait, and know the protection of almighty provision for them. It is here that “the word of the Lord came to him” in a way so graciously characteristic of the divine compassion in understanding that Elijah poured out the pent up sorrow of his soul.

“And, behold, the Lord passed by.” But this was not His drawing near in response to the waiting man—still within the shelter he had sought. At the passing of Omniscience, the established earth things are shown to have but transient stability. The “great and strong wind rent the mountains”—those masses of seeming impregnability—“But the Lord was not IN the wind.” The earthquake, and the fire that followed, in disturbing and consuming forces, were the inevitable outcome of the passing by of Sovereignty and Holiness. Puny man can neither prevent nor withstand the outcome of even the passing presence of a holy God. The poor earth, sullied by many a sin, trembles and bows before the “consuming fire.” “But the Lord was not IN the earthquake . . . NOT IN the fire.”

“And after the fire a still small voice” (verse 12). The earth dwellers, far away, would have been filled with foreboding at the onrush of that rending wind, and that known terror as the earth shook beneath them while the mountain

rocked in a blaze of fire: but, when the effect of the passing of the Mighty and the Holy One had died away, there was only one man who heard the quiet tones—the voice of infinite understanding—of wonderful compassion. That man had travelled far to hear the Voice. It came as from a distance —“a still small voice,” heard only by one who had drawn near to God. It was private to Elijah—a personal voice for his ear alone. “And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.”

Elijah does not wonder at the question repeated—and his God has long foreknown what his answer will be. The burdened prophet hears the voice of a Friend. A proven Comforter speaks, within the question, saying “pour out your sorrow afresh—unburden to Me the weight of your anxiety for MY WITNESS in Israel, and I will come down with you into the deeps of your depression that you and you only remain a solitary voice to cry against the creeping death of Israel’s idolatry.”

The questions of God are certainly not for information. Who, indeed, can add to His knowledge, or offer wisdom to Him who is its only Source? Are not His questions so often the opening of the door to His treasure house? And is not His hand ever reaching for the latch? To the poor in spirit who have no treasure of their own—to the weary in the journey, at the end of their little strength—to those who feel they have nothing to bring Him at the end—for these, the “cake baken on the coals” not of earth’s providing, the cruse of water of life in the wilderness, and the Voice—intimate and “small,” as coming down to where we wait the invitation to tell all—till ALL the care is cast upon the One “Who careth for you.”

There is no word of recrimination or of upbraiding in this Presence. One may learn the personal suitability of the divine ministry here. Far reaching missions are entrusted to the prophet’s service—to Damascus, the capital city of Syria in the distant north—to the anointing of kings and of a prophet to minister to him and so, ultimately to continue his work. With strength refreshed, he shall face Ahab,

king of Israel, again, and pronounce the judgment of God upon his apostasy and foretell his death and that of his whole house (I Kings xxi.17-24).

Furthermore, the Voice of comfort and reviving speaks secrets of the future, till then unknown, and shares, in grace, the hidden knowledge which uplifts the hearer. The word at parting (verse 18) is so in keeping with the tender thought of his Master that one may be assured Elijah went forth-with upon his way, not only with the future clear before him, but with the solace that the witness for God in Israel was seven thousand times greater than he had known. "Go, return on thy way"—but how joyful that returning—"Yet have I left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

Let us, too, "draw near to God." The need of witness to His character is greater than ever in these "last times." This witness is not in words only. When, in His faithfulness, He draws near to us He brings awareness of His holiness and His power. We take our place in weakness and submission, and find an outflow from His fulness into our emptiness. So are we newly energised to hear His direction, and, indeed, to follow it.

EDWARD T. WOOD

JACOB, WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN

(Read: Genesis xxxv.16-29; xxxvii.1-36; xlii.-xlv.7)

THOUGH JACOB'S exile from the land of promise was now ended, and though he had grown in the knowledge of God to the point where he began to be occupied with God Himself, as distinct from His mercies to Jacob, deeper sorrows than any he had yet experienced were in store for him.

First the death of Rachel, in giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son. Nothing is recorded of the effect of this upon Jacob, but a vivid recollection is brought out in his words to Joseph just before his death, "Rachel died by me when I came from Padan, when there was but a little way to

come to Ephrath." But we do learn that he refused to adopt Rachel's own name for her child, "Son of my sorrow," and instead named him "Son of my right hand." Here were courage and faith in evidence, where we might have expected him to be overwhelmed with grief.

A little later came the news of the sin of his eldest son, "Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine," and of this we are only told "*Israel* heard."

Against these sorrows there was Jacob's delight in his son Joseph, and we may surely take the statement that "*Israel* loved him more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age" as being something more than an old man's weakness. For as Jacob himself was now more spiritual, he could appreciate more fully the excellent qualities of Joseph, the more so as they contrasted so brightly with those of his other sons.

Yet he was both unwise and unkind to make his preference so plain, so as to provoke almost inevitably the hatred which the other sons felt for Joseph. Just as it had been with Leah and Rachel, so here also, Jacob's unequal dealing was in part responsible for the jealousy, and for the unhappiness which flowed from it. Affection and justice ought to be equally balanced, yet how often do we fail on one side or the other! Perhaps here, in God's government, it was needful that Jacob should himself experience what it was to be deceived by his own sons, as he had deceived *his* father.

When they sent him the blood-stained coat, with the callous remark, "This have we found; know now whether it be thy son's coat or no," we can well understand that Jacob was too overcome by his grief to suspect any treachery; but later on, seeing that it is almost impossible, with so many, for some not to betray a guilty secret, he seems to have accused them in his own mind. This comes out when, years later, they return from Egypt without Simeon, and he says "Me ye have bereaved; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me."

It was one thing, however, to find men untrustworthy, but had he forgotten God's word? If God had promised to multiply his seed, not to diminish it, could the early death of his

son be reconciled with this? Then also there were the dreams of Joseph, foretelling an unlooked-for eminence for him. If only Jacob had remembered God's faithfulness, so often proved, he might have extracted the truth from his sons, and found hope in the divine word that he might yet see his lost son again.

When, having sent his sons into Egypt to buy corn, they return with the strange story of the lord of the land who retained Simeon and demanded Benjamin, yet restored their corn money (surely intended by Joseph as a testimony of goodwill), Jacob's despairing words, already quoted, show how low unbelief had brought him. Had he, like David when all seemed to be lost, "encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (I Samuel xxx.6), he would not have uttered the despairing words, "All these things are against me." For "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans viii.31). Truly these things were written for our learning, and do we not need the lesson?

When he realises the necessity of another visit to Egypt to buy corn, he does at last invoke God's help, and here he is again called Israel: "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin." But then he adds, "If I am bereaved. I am bereaved." To call on God, without faith in His power and grace, is of little value.

JOSEPH IS ALIVE

At length they return with the astounding news of Joseph's exaltation in Egypt. However much Jacob might disbelieve *their* words as they told him, the message of Joseph which they repeated to him had a genuine ring of Joseph's faith about it, for it began with God — "*God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me . . . and I will nourish thee; for there are yet five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.*"

Then, when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent, his spirit revived, and Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

Yes, he knew at last that God had not failed to keep for him the blessing He had promised him. Yet it was too late now for faith to glorify God in the day of darkness. To walk by faith is a privilege which heaven itself cannot afford us.

JACOB COMES INTO EGYPT

Now Israel (as he is once more called), when he reaches Beersheba — the limit of the land of promise — pauses before leaving it. He remembered how disastrous it had been for Abraham to go down to Egypt (Genesis xii.10-20), and how God had commanded Isaac not to do so, in days of famine (Genesis xxvi.2), and so he sought God's face before going further, offering sacrifices to God. This was remarkable, especially in view of his eagerness to see Joseph, and God at once responds, giving him the assurance he needs: "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: *I will go down with thee into Egypt*; and I will surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." It is beautiful to see how God meets all his servant's fears at leaving the land in which he had been called to sojourn, and reveals the divine plan to form Jacob's family into a nation in Egypt, while showing at the same time that nothing of the blessedness of the promised land would be lost. Finally, the sweet comfort of a Father-God: "Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

When at length Jacob not only embraces his son, but learns from his own lips of all God's dealings with him, he realises how wonderfully God had wrought in all that had seemed so dark and perplexing. Let us who read these things written of old learn to walk even now in the light which faith gives, and know that God works all things together for good to them that love Him, to those who are called, as Jacob was, according to His purpose.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Gospel of John does not lend itself to easy analysis. Attempted analyses differ greatly according to the point of view adopted in the interpretation. In the beauty of the flower, its detailed symmetry and harmony of colour strike the eye; in that of the tree, its details are often unshapely and apparently incongruous, yet they are always connected, and essential to the life with which the tree is instinct from root to leaf tip. John's writings in their beauty are comparable to the latter. Viewed understandingly, and in proper perspective, all are fair and comely, providing strength and food and shade, with incomparable sweetness, grace and grandeur.

W. J. HOCKING

Chapter i. 1-18

(1) i.1-5: *The Lord's Person in relation to the Godhead (verses 1,2); to creation (verse 3); and to man (verses 4, 5)*

IN VERSE 1 we have an undefined beginning, the object of which is to convey to us a past eternity. The expression "Word" means more than spokesman. The One Who is called "The Word" is, in His own being, the expression of God's nature and character. He utters in word and action all that God is for man. As words are the expression of our hidden thoughts, so Christ expresses the thought of the invisible God. In His essential nature, God remains inscrutable: Christ expresses or reveals Him.

It is worthy of note that the name "Word" is not used of the Lord during His life and ministry. It occurs here as an eternal title. Luke (i.2 "eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word") connects his testimony in the Gospel to the Son of man with the divine Person of John i. Apart from his reference, the only other occurrence is in Revelation xix.13.

Verse 1 asserts the eternal existence of the Word — "In the beginning was the Word;" His distinct personality—"and the Word was with God;" and His divine essence and nature — "the Word was God."

Verse 2 is added to show that this distinctness of personality in the Godhead is as eternal as His existence. In no sense therefore was the Word an emanation from God.

Verse 3 declares that all created existence originated by Him.

In verse 4, "life" is not the created life of "living creatures" nor the product of "divine creative energy." It is the disclosure of the source of the new and divine life for man which was in God's mind in providing the tree of life. "In Him was life" was always true of the Word.

This life was designed for men. It found its delight in men, and was meant to be for their participation. It is the exclusive privilege of men to have the offer of this life from God.

Verse 5 introduces "darkness" — the negation of light. In the physical sphere light dispels darkness; in the moral sphere the Light shone and the darkness comprehended it not, i.e., it refused to be dispelled by the Light. This resistance would have been fatal for man, had not God His resources. Now the blessing comes down sovereignly from God.

(2) i.6-13: *The Effect of the Presence of this Divine Person in the World*

After the blaze of divine glory in the opening verses, our minds in verse 6 are suddenly focussed upon a man — the forerunner of Christ. John was sent to bear witness to the Light. John was not the light itself, but a witness to it. By this emphatic distinction, the glory of Him Who was in His own Person, the Light, is maintained.

The inevitable effect of the presence of the Lord Jesus in the world was to show up all that men were. Darkness had concealed their real state, but the light brought it all out.

John uses the present tense, "lighteth," as he so frequently does, to express the nature and character of a thing. The true Light, coming into the world, lightens every man.

Verses 10 and 11 state historically the general result of the coming of the true Light. The world He had made knew Him not (verse 10); His own people, Israel, received Him not (verse 11).

To those individuals, however, who did receive Him, was given the right to become children of God (verse 12). The correct word here is "children," not "sons,"—the new relationship by nature of those who receive Christ, being the point emphasised. But besides those who "received" Christ in the days of His flesh, the same relationship of children of God is extended to all who "believe on His name" (cp., however, Colossians ii.6).

These exceptions to the general rule show the sovereignty of God. He bestows the right to be His children according to the purpose of His will — natural descent is entirely excluded; new birth is of God (verse 13).

(3) i.14-18: *The Lord's presentation of Himself to man*

Verse 14 reveals that the Word became flesh: all that God is concerns itself with the needs of men. Moreover, the Incarnate Word dwelt (tabernacled) among us, in contrast with the transient theophanies of Old Testament days. Tabernacling, none the less, implies the short duration of His visitation.

Nor did the incarnation mean the entire shrouding of His eternal glory. For though its outward effulgence was missing, His moral glory shone uninterruptedly, the filial characteristic of which as the only-begotten is referred to here. This glory was, however, visible only to the eye of faith. His chosen eye-witnesses, the apostles, contemplated it, and their contemplation was revived and made accessible for others through their writings, when the Spirit of God came down.

Further, that men might draw near to Him, the Word came "full of grace and truth" — grace to attract and win: truth to purify and set right before God.

It is a tribute to John's faithfulness that his own words of witness were used by the Spirit of God (verse 15) in declaring the Lord's pre-eminence. There must be no confusion between the two; one was the Son of God, the other was His forerunner. But John declared, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for He was before me" (verse 15).

Three results of the Incarnation are then stated (verses 16-18):

- (a) We all (believers) receive of His fulness, and grace upon grace (one grace after another);
- (b) Grace and truth subsist (J.N.D) through Jesus Christ, thus displacing dispensationally the law given by Moses;
- (c) God, the Invisible to mortal eyes, is revealed by the Only-begotten Who is in the bosom of the Father.

(The above are notes, compiled by the Editor, of Bible Readings held in London during the winter of 1932/33, and are reprinted from "The Bible Monthly" for October, 1938)

THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN'S SOUL

THERE IS CLEAR and decisive evidence in scripture that man has an immortal soul, and that his being is everlasting. Neither man's soul nor his spirit dies or ceases to exist, according to the teaching of the word of God. Man's body is expressly described as "mortal" (Romans vi.12; viii.11); but the term, "mortal", is nowhere applied to the soul. In like manner, it is man's flesh (2 Corinthians iv.11), not his spirit or soul, which is said to be "mortal;" and at the Lord's coming, the mortal part of the living believer, that is, the body, will be swallowed up of life (2 Corinthians v.4), and that which is mortal, the body of him that has fallen asleep, will put on immortality (I Corinthians xv.54).

Again, man can kill the body, because it is mortal, but not the soul, because it is immortal; physical death does not touch its existence (Matthew x.28). When the rich man died and was buried, his soul was still alive in hell or hades (Luke xvi. 22,23), and he was suffering conscious torment. At the judgment of the living nations, the Son of man, seated upon the throne of His glory, will send away the wicked into everlasting punishment (Matthew xxv.46), proving that the wicked have endless being, and will endure endless punishment, because, though unsaved, they in their nature are of unending existence.

These scriptures, without bringing further witness, are sufficient to justify the belief that man has an immortal soul in

contrast with a mortal body. We read of the body being raised from death and becoming a spiritual body (I Corinthians xv.42-44), but not of the resurrection of the soul, because it does not die. In the intermediate state, when the soul is separate from the body, all (both righteous and wicked) are still alive to God, though dead to their fellow-men upon the earth. This truth the Lord stated to the Sadducees (Luke xx.38), who denied the resurrection (Acts xxiii.8). Our Lord used the words of Moses (who called God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to show that the souls of all men live after the death of the body. God calls the dead the living, though they are dead humanly speaking, but they are not dead in an absolute sense, their souls remaining alive after physical death. So John "saw" the souls of the martyrs (Revelation vi.9), alive under the altar before they were re-united with their bodies in the first resurrection to live and reign with Christ the thousand years (Revelation xx.4).

God only has immortality (I Timothy vi.16), that is, He only has it essentially and inherently; to all others it is a gift bestowed by God, or a quality derived from the Creator by the creature possessing it. Angels never die, and are therefore immortal (Luke xx.36), though the term itself is not directly applied to them in scripture. Man's soul is immortal because originally he became a "living soul" by direct divine inbreathing (Genesis ii.7). Hence, man naturally, apart from the gift of grace, is called God's son and God's offspring (Luke iii.38; Acts xvii.29), and is thereby distinguished from all other earthly creatures.

When it is said in Ezekiel xviii.4.20 "The soul that sinneth it shall die", this does not teach that man's spiritual part is subject to death. "Soul" in this chapter means "person," and is so used in many other passages; as for instance, Jacob going to Egypt with "threescore and fifteen souls" (Acts vii.14).

W. J. HOCKING

(From "The Bible Monthly", March, 1934)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIII

DECEMBER 1965

No. 12

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London: C. A. HAMMOND, 11 Little Britain, E.C.1

Tunbridge Wells: BIBLE AND TRACT DEPOT, 17 Queens Road

U.S.A.: H. W. BRAUNER Franklin Park., New Jersey.

Canada: OTTO MULLER, 7, Glen Castle Street, Toronto

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May be ordered through most Booksellers

Communications for the Editor should be sent to E. A. FITTMAN, Chesterfield House, 4 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Business enquiries as to WORDS OF HELP or other publications mentioned, should be addressed to the Publisher, C. A. HAMMOND (Trust Bible Depot) 11, Little Britain, London, E.C.1.

Made and Printed in Great Britain and Published by C. A. Hammond Trust Bible Depot
11 Little Britain, London E.C.1

WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

We are pleased to announce that the four articles by Mr. Edward T. Wood, on the subject of the Second Coming of the Lord, which appeared in the April to July issues of WORDS OF HELP, are to be reproduced in attractive booklet form under the title "HE THAT SHALL COME WILL COME." A further notice of this will be given in due course.

It is delightful and comforting to be in a position to sound this note of certainty amid the change and decay of all around in the world, and in days of deepening spiritual darkness to hold aloft the bright beacon of divine promise. May the thought of the Lord's return for His own, the believer's sure hope, carry His people forward to face a new year — should He tarry this long — with courage and joyful expectation.

"HE WHICH TESTIFIETH THESE THINGS SAITH,
SURELY I COME QUICKLY.
AMEN. EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS"
(Revelation xxii.20)

(Concluded from inside back cover)

own use, but he sought to make friends of his master's debtors by reducing the amounts due from them. This was an act of fraud, and his lord commends him only for his foresight in attempting to make some provision for the future. His actual conduct is condemned, inasmuch as he is described by our Lord as the "unjust steward" (verse 8).

The Lord instructs his disciples to make use of the goods committed to their charge, "the mammon of unrighteousness," so as to ensure a heavenly reward, instead of employing it for present comfort and enjoyment in a selfish manner. The Lord Jesus being refused as King, the time of ease and prosperity in this world is in abeyance, and His followers, therefore, must not expect a time of earthly blessedness during the Lord's absence. They must provide for the future. W. J. HOCKING

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

AS WE REACH the last month of another year, it is well for us to have a real sense within of the unfailing goodness of God shown to us through all the days that are past. It is well for us also to try to express something of what we have proved the Lord to be to us and for us hitherto, and of our own confidence for the future.

Scripture provides examples of such testimony, often given after a long life-time of experience of God's faithfulness, and we here offer some quotations by way of reminder to our readers.

Jacob came of a family line which was blessed of God, and he himself received remarkable divine promises, as we read in Genesis xxviii. "The Lord . . . said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth . . . and, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Jacob was then some forty years old, and he lived to the age of a hundred and forty-seven. At the end of his life, when blessing his son Joseph's two sons, he said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads . . . Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers" (Genesis xlviii.).

Can we not also say that God has fed us in blessing both temporal and spiritual, and will bring us at length with all the redeemed to the heavenly land.

Moses is undoubtedly one of the greatest of all the Lord's servants. What did God say to him? "I am the God of thy father . . . Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt . . . Certainly I will be with thee" (Exodus iii.). Moses was then 80 years old.

When Israel, sheltered from judgment by the blood of the paschal lamb, had left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord (Exodus xv.). "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation . . . The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

Before Moses died, he was able to go to the top of Pisgah, opposite Jericho, and to see for himself the goodly promised land the other side of Jordan. See Deuteronomy xxxiv.: "The Lord showed him all the land . . . and the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed." The record adds, "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

Further, we are told in Matthew xvii., Mark ix. and Luke ix., that Moses was given the wonderful privilege of appearing in glory with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, there talking with Him "of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" Luke ix.

Let our hearts thrill as we see the Lord's glory revealed in the scriptures, and as we hear Him speak of the Father's house, and of His coming again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also (John xiv.).

Joshua is another example in the scriptures of man proving God's faithfulness. After the death of Moses, a new leader was needed to lead Israel over Jordan, overcome the enemies in Canaan, and establish God's people in peaceful possession of the promised land. God chose Joshua, and said to him (Joshua i.), "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them . . . as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage . . . Only be thou strong and very courageous . . . Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

At the end of the book of Joshua (chapter xxiii.), Joshua, now

a hundred and ten years old, called the people to him and said, "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Fellow-believers, let us not be discouraged, but be strong and of a good courage, for the Lord is with us here, and will soon come to take us to be with Him there!

In the New Testament we see the Lord's faithfulness in caring for His own. Here is one example. In Luke ix. and x., Jesus sent out His disciples to preach and heal, and in His instructions for their service, He said, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money," and again, "carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes." In Luke xxii. the Lord is sat down with His disciples to eat the last passover with them before his death, and in verse 35 we read, "He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." Brief but blessed testimony to the Lord's divine power which had provided for them all the time they were about on His service. "The Lord will provide." Let us be sure He will provide for us also all the days until we see His face.

We close with a brief reference to another outstanding servant of the Lord, the apostle Paul. Right at the commencement of his career, the Lord said to Ananias (Acts ix.), "He is a chosen vessel unto me." Towards the end of his life, when appearing before Festus and King Agrippa (Acts xxvi.), Paul says, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great."

Paul was inspired to write the great Epistle to the Romans, and in chapter viii. we have those splendid words, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,

nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the *love of God*, which is in *Christ Jesus our Lord*." Let us read the passage again slowly, taking every word home to ourselves, and feeling fresh courage and thankfulness filling us.

The scriptures truly give us many examples of those who have proved God's faithfulness. May we also, in the words of Hebrews xii., run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto the supreme Example, Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Amen. W. H. L. GRAHAM

JACOB WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN

VI. Jacob in Egypt

(*Read: Genesis xlvii. 1-12, 27-31; xlviii.*)

WHEN HIS FATHER arrived in Egypt, Joseph presented him to Pharaoh, who was evidently struck by his aged appearance. This seems to show that the ages of the patriarchs were even then unusual. We may also deduce, perhaps with surprise, that if Jacob was 130 when he stood before Pharaoh, he could not have been less than 74 when he came to Haran.

But though confessing that, compared to his fathers, his days had been few and troubled, yet Jacob blesses Pharaoh. Coming as the head of a famine-stricken clan and seeking sustenance, he is yet rich beyond the world's estimation, and so is able to bestow a blessing on one of its greatest kings. This surely ought to remind us that we too are in this world to be channels of blessing to it.

Thus Jacob dwelt for the last seventeen years of his life in Egypt, watching the increase of his family according to the divine word, and rejoicing in the glory of his beloved Joseph.

Yet his heart was not in Egypt, but in the land of promise. Had not God said "I will surely bring thee up again"? So, when the time of his death draws near, he calls Joseph and makes him swear to bury him, not with the magnificence of an Egyptian funeral, but in the sepulchre of Abraham and Isaac,

in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan, an obscure grave in what was still a foreign land.

The concluding words of the chapter (xlvii.) are better read as in the Septuagint*, "And Israel worshipped (leaning) upon the top of his staff," and the words are quoted so in Hebrews xi. 21: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." Two acts of faith, not one, are referred to in this scripture, for the blessing of Joseph's sons, though mentioned first, comes in the next chapter of Genesis.

Jacob's worship here is undoubtedly because of the vision which rose before the eyes of his faith as he insisted on Joseph's oath to bury him in Canaan. Did he not see the day when divine power will have made good every promise, when restored and blessed Israel will possess the land of their father's sojourning, and when too, his own portion will be in the heavenly city, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews xi. 10)?

Then later, in his last illness, Joseph comes to see him, bringing his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and, recalling all God's goodness to him, Jacob blesses them. "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

The word "fed" used here has the sense of "shepherded," implying all the care of a shepherd for his sheep. Jacob, himself a shepherd, understood well the loving care, the diligence, the patience, that the word implied. Perhaps he recalled his own earlier waywardness. But, he says, "God shepherded me all my life long unto this day." Now he desires the same blessing for Joseph's sons.

Though he saw the lads but dimly, he anticipated Joseph's arrangement of them as he presented them, and crossed his hands so as to place his right hand on the head of the younger,

* The difference is only in the vowels of the word "staff," which were not in the original Hebrew at all.

Ephraim, for whom he foresaw greater things than for Manasseh. We know how in fact the name Ephraim came to be used for all the ten northern tribes. How responsive Jacob was now to what God had revealed about them, even though he had to resist Joseph's attempted correction. It was a far cry from the day when he had attempted by deception to manipulate matters for himself. Now, in the calmness of faith, he was content to view, with clear prophetic vision, the assured fulfilment of the purposes of God.

In the inspired record of the life of Jacob, God has given us a wonderful demonstration of what His sustaining love and patient discipline can accomplish in shaping for glory a most unpromising vessel. The justice, too, of His dealings, is exhibited in a way to silence any cavils of unbelief. However, we must also view the life of Jacob in the light of Romans iii. 23-25: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood, *to declare His righteousness for the passing over of sins done in time past*, through the forbearance of God." So that Jacob's acceptance with God was on the very same basis as our own—the blood of Calvary.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

(Read Chapter i.19-ii.11)

(A) i 19-28: *John's witness to the Lord's presence upon earth*

John the Baptist's preaching had stirred the nation, and a deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem waited upon him (verse 19) with questions about himself, but John by his answers diverted them from himself to Christ.

The questions related:

- (a) to John's singularity. When they asked "Who art thou?" John emphatically denied that he was the Christ (verse 20).
- (b) to the force and penetration of his words. When they enquired whether he were Elias at whose *word* rain was

withheld and given (1 Kings xvii. 1), or "that prophet" (Deuteronomy xviii. 15-19, whose *word* would command attention), John replied that he was only a voice, announcing the Coming One (verses 21-24).

(c) to the baptism of repentance. John then confessed the superiority of the Coming One, who would baptise with the Holy Ghost, thus ascribing Godhead to Christ (verses 25-28).

(B) i 29-34: *John's witness to Christ after the sign from heaven*

The Lamb of God will take away the sin (not sins) of the world (verse 29). The removal of the sins of believers is included, but the Baptist's testimony covers the entire scope of the Lord's work of taking away the sin of the world by redemption and judgment. This work will be completed when the new heavens and the new earth are established (Revelation xxi. 1-5).

The first hint of the Lord as the Lamb for sacrifice is accompanied by John's re-affirmation of the surpassing glory of His Person (verses 30, 31).

Further, the Spirit descends upon Him at once and abides upon Him. The anointing of the Levitical priests was preceded by the shedding of the blood of a sin-offering (Leviticus viii. ix.). But the Lord being without sin, the Spirit descends and abides upon Him at the beginning of His manifestation to Israel (verses 32, 33), *not* after the cross.

Seeing this descent of the Spirit John bare record that Jesus is the Son of God (verse 34).

(C) i. 35-42: *The First Day of Christ's Testimony*

From this point John the Baptist fades out of the Gospel narrative. Two of his disciples, the fruit of his labour, leave him for One Who was preferred before him. His cry of ecstasy "Behold the Lamb of God!" turned them from himself to follow Jesus (verses 35-37), and to go on to abide with Him (verses 38-39).

How quickly the Lord observed them following, and how graciously He drew out and granted their desire to know where He dwelt! And the two disciples spent the day in the company

of the Son of God! Exactly where the interview occurred, we are not told; nor what passed between them. But as the effect Andrew set off to find his own brother, whom he brought to Jesus (verses 40-42).

These verses contain an outline of prominent characteristics of believers in the present day of grace. Following Christ, enjoying, by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit, His presence at all times, and seeking to draw others to Him, are such marks.

(D) i 43-51: *The Second Day of Christ's Testimony*

The Lord Himself called Philip to follow Him. In the cases of Andrew and Simon, the witness of others was used to bring them to Him.

Philip conveyed to Nathanael the news that they had found the Messiah.

Nathanael, being incredulous, is bidden to come and see for himself that Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus reveals to the guileless Israelite His omniscience which changes his unbelief into wonder, his wonder into conviction, and his conviction into confession that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel. Like Thomas after the resurrection, Nathanael believes when he has seen.

Then the Lord told Nathanael that he should see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

The call of Philip and Nathanael sets forth the revival of the Lord's sovereign work amongst the nation of Israel after the church has been removed to heaven. In that day the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed, and a remnant will accept Jesus as their Messiah as a result of that testimony.

(E) ii 1-11: *The Third Day of Christ's Testimony*

This day saw in Cana of Galilee the beginning of the miracles (or, signs) done by Jesus. When provision for the marriage was exhausted, the Lord showed what resources were in Him. He turned the water into wine, astonishing the ruler of the feast who knew not whence it was.

The parenthetic remark that "the servants which drew the water knew" recalls the words of the Psalmist, "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalm ciii 7). How blessed to be amongst the servants who are sufficiently near their Master to understand His ways!

The incident foreshadows the later dispensation, when the Lord will quench the thirst of a sin-parched earth with the wine of millennial joy.

(To be continued)

SEEING CHRIST AS HE IS

"Father, (as to) those who Thou hast given Me, I desire that where I am they also may be with Me that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before (the) foundation of (the) world." "See what love the Father has given to us that we should be called (the) children of God. For this reason the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (John xvii 24; 1 John iii 1-3, New Tr.).

We often sing, "What can full joy and blessing be, but being where Thou art?" Christ Himself is our heart's delight. We could not think of eternity as endurable apart from the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus, the One Who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. The ages of eternity will never exhaust the fulness that is in Him. Our souls will for ever feast upon Him Who is our joy, our glory, and our continual theme of worship. We shall be with the blessed Saviour, Who loved us—loved us with the full knowledge of all that we were, and gave Himself for us. We shall be "for ever with the Lord."

THE LORD'S OWN DESIRE FOR US

In John xvii, what a manifestation we have of His love in that His desire before the Father is that we should be with Him!

It is not to be wondered at that we, who know the Lord's love for us, and who know, too, the manifold cares and trials of this wilderness, should desire to be with Him. But when we remember our own waywardness and unworthiness how wonderful it becomes to us that the Son of God should desire that we—such as we—should be with Him!

It has often been remarked that this passage in John xvii. is the only expression of the will of the Lord Jesus to be found in scripture; and we are the subject of that expression of His will: "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; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

THIS GLORY NOT THAT WHICH THE WORLD WILL SEE

We know that the day is coming when the glory of the Lord Jesus will be manifested in this world, and then every eye will see Him in His mediatorial glory. But His love for us is such that He is not content that we should wait until that day to see His glory. His expressed desire is that we should be with Him in the Father's house, there to behold that glory of His, which is hidden from the world. We shall see Him as He is, but this the world will never see.

How marvellous it seems, when we think of all that we are, that the Son of God should desire for us that we should see Him as He is, and that we should be told of this desire! How infinitely greater this love is than divine compassion and mercy, though we have these also! It is far beyond all else that the Lord Jesus should so love us that His desire is to have us with Himself in order that we may see His glory. And in revealing this desire to us, He counts that our hearts will be delighted with the prospect. Observe that it is not here a matter of communicating blessing to us, but it is the outgoing of His own heart's desire to the Father concerning us.

SEEING HIM AS HE IS

In the Epistle of John, we have those words, "We shall see Him as He is." How shall we gaze upon that glory? "When I saw Him," says the same writer, "I fell at His feet as dead." Nothing less than this could be the effect of His glory upon us, if we were to have a vision of it now. But, in the coming day, the Lord will fit us to gaze upon the brightest rays of His glory. He will not take us into His presence without fitting us to be there.

But the Lord will never love us more than He does now. We shall never have a closer place in His affections than we have now. "Now are we children of God;" and this relationship of love can never increase.

We are already closely associated with Him, as it says, "the world knows us not because it knew Him not." These are, let me say in passing, heart-searching words for us. Are they really true of us? Is it true that our neighbours do not understand us because they do not understand the Lord Jesus?

What did the world know of the source of the Lord's peace and joy? When He walked this earth, man only saw what was upon the surface. And, if we are finding our joy in the Lord Jesus, and not in the things around us, we also shall be unknown to the world. We have died, and our life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians iii. 3). That is not for security only, but our lives, being there above, are not understood down here.

But the day is coming when all that Christ is now as our life will appear, or be manifested, before the eyes of the world. Do you think that in that day the world will wonder that we walked in a path of separation in this day?

CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD NOW

"Now are we the children of God." This is not altogether a new thing in divine dealings. The Jewish saints were children of God as truly as ourselves, but this relationship was not declared to them. We are not only children of God, but we are called children of God. The Epistle of John was written to Jewish

believers, and therefore it is that the apostle says that we are not only children of God, but are declared to be such.

Through all eternity, there can be no advance upon this relationship. Now we are children of God, and brought into that place of affection, as near to God as we can be. But while there can never be a better place for us in the affections of the Father and the Son than that which is ours now, we are looking to be taken out of the condition of weakness in which we now are.

“Now are we the children of God, but it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but” this we do know that “when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Such is the love of Christ for us. The more we know of it, the more we are bowed in His presence in wonder and worship. He is the rightful King and Lord of all. His power will be felt in this world, and His glory displayed to the ends of the earth. But we shall see Him in that glory in which He is now in heaven—“the Father’s glorified.”

THIS HOPE PURIFIES

What is the moral effect of this hope of seeing Christ, if it has really laid hold upon our hearts? John goes on to tell us that “every one that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” It is a joy to have such a hope. Many have gone before us. Think how they laboured, how they waited, and then were laid to sleep. What a privilege that we are alive, and waiting for the Son of God from Heaven! What joy this hope should bring us!

How we ought to judge ourselves in the light of it day by day! We can really be satisfied with nothing within us. Our lack of constancy will be our great distress, if our consciences are exercised. How little do we know of the patience of hope! Yet what a divine favour it is to be called out in these last days to wait for God’s Son from Heaven, Jesus, Who delivered us from the wrath to come! May the Lord, in His grace, in view of the

spirit of lukewarmness prevailing in this present age, so keep our hearts that He may find us ready to welcome Him.

If we believed the Lord Jesus would come today, and were really to search our hearts as before Him, should we find things in our ways which we would wish to alter? This is the important question raised by our hope in Christ. It is not that we doubt our title to meet Him. His precious blood is the answer to all our guilt, to all that we lack. But, beloved, it is impossible to be in the enjoyment of the love of Christ without having the desire that, at His return, the Lord Jesus may find in us that which He looks for and values. He Himself said, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching" (Luke xii. 37).

G. F. COX

Reprinted from *The Bible Monthly*, January 1935)

THE UNJUST STEWARD

(Note on Luke xvi. 1-8)

The parable (for such it seems to be, though not actually so called) teaches that present actions should be performed in view of what is coming in the future. The Lord addressed it to the disciples (verse 1), and He followed it by a saying which showed how it was applicable to them (verses 9-12).

While the parable has a general application to all, there is no doubt that the steward who wasted his master's goods is representative of the Jews, who possessed many choice privileges accorded to them as God's chosen nation (Romans ix. 4,5). But instead of using faithfully these advantages over other nations, they abused them, and dishonoured God Who had placed them in this position of trust. Now, through the shameful rejection of their Messiah, they were about to be displaced from their stewardship, and driven away from the land of their fathers.

In the parable, the steward heeded the warning (which the Jews did not do), and acted prudently in view of his imminent discharge. He did not appropriate his master's money for his

(Continued on inside front cover)

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