

# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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Vol. LXI

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No. 1

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

doctrine). So far from thinking the eclectic school according to the Lord's mind, to my view it utterly dislocates and spoils the truth God has disinterred about His Church. What I find there is the body of Christ, and doubtless the various members in their place. There are feet as well as hands. The feeble have their use as well as the strong, and all as God is pleased to give and order. As the large-hearted apostle teaches, the uncomely parts, instead of being left outside, are treated, being in danger of scorn, with more abundant honour. Such is the way of God, such His express word. Have we learnt to bow? Those that are strong are expected to bear the infirmities of the weak, instead of pleasing themselves. Religious rationalism might think it best to have only the strong, only those of the same mind, only such as had attained a certain given point of truth; but is it Christ? The Church of God should be before our hearts, as it is according to His word. The moment we seek to model, or even to desire in our hearts anything different from what is given us by Him, there is fatal insubjection stamped on the thought, and confusion must be the result wherever that theory is yielded to or carried out. And therefore, brethren, I am persuaded it is the will of God concerning us, especially in the present broken state of the Church, that he who is most strengthened in divine wisdom seek most especially to cherish the ignorant and the feeble who have attained ever so little — that we seek to walk towards all saints according to Christ's love for the Church. Assuredly Christ cherishes, not merely the more worthy and more honourable members of His body, but the Church as a whole, cherishes most of all, if there be any difference, those that need His love most. Are we in this to have communion with Him or not?

W. KELLY

*(Extracted)*

## NEW YEAR, 1973

### FORGETTING THE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND (Phil. iii.13).

Again we face a new year. It is always a solemn time for those that realize that they must give an account of their lives. The past is known, all too well, although much has, of course, been forgotten; the future is known only to Him from Whom nothing is hidden.

What can we carry over into the new year? There is much that we shall carry over that would be much better left behind. In the earlier part of Philippians iii. the apostle sums up the things that might have been for him a cause for boasting, but when he comes to make up his annual balance sheet, as it were, he finds that nothing is to be compared with "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". For the believer, the only question that really matters is: "Do I know more of Christ than a year ago? Is He more precious to me?" Paul was willing to count all else but loss, if he might "win Christ, and be found in Him".

What are our desires and ambitions for 1973? It would be well to put at the head of the list: "**That I may know Him.**" Peter's desire for the readers of his second epistle was that they might "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". To spend much time in His company, learning of Him, and also speaking of Him to others, will affect our lives. The hope of His return, too, has a sobering and purifying effect. We see the things of this world at their true value.

Secondly, may we know more fully "**the power of His resurrection.**" In Ephesians we read that the same power that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and set Him at God's right hand far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, is operative in the believer, quickening him, renewing him, transforming him, and making him fruitful in every good work. If we know little of this practically in our lives, it is surely because we are not willing to yield ourselves wholly, that God may be glorified in us.

Thirdly, the apostle desired to know **“the fellowship of His sufferings.”** Dare we add this to our list of desires for the coming year? We cannot partake, of course, in the sufferings of Christ our Lord as the bearer of sins and guilt. There was no other that could share in that. Even the beloved disciple John had to stand at a distance, beholding. But the sufferings that He endured daily as He worked among the rough, profane, unscrupulous inhabitants of Nazareth, toiling honestly and conscientiously as a Man amongst men, yet surely, like Lot, “vexing His righteous soul from day to day” — do we know anything of this? Are we grieved, as He was, at the hardness of men’s hearts when they will not believe, and yet willing to go on preaching the Word, in season, out of season? Are we indignant, as He was, when His Father’s Name is dishonoured, as in its flippant use in “pop” music and radio programmes? Are we moved with compassion, as He was, at the multitudes being led astray by false teachers, and deprived of their portion like the young children in Lamentations iv.4? Do we see them as sheep without a shepherd, and hasten to obey His word, “Give ye them to eat?” May we know more of this in 1973, if the Lord has not yet come.

Above all, Paul was determined to forget those things which were behind, and to reach forth unto those things which were before. It is a mistake to live in the past, occupied with past failures, or even past victories. We must “press forward”. The children of Israel, in all their sad history of failure and disobedience, were always looking back to their deliverance out of Egypt, but in Jeremiah xxiii.7 God says: “They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them”. A more glorious destiny awaits them than any they knew in the past. So for us, the old year is gone, with all the past, beyond recall. We have the present in which to be occupied with Christ, and a future of surpassing glory — to be with Him for eternity. Let us be “Looking for that blessed hope”.

A. RETALICK

## PAUL'S ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF

What a tremendous transformation took place when Saul of Tarsus was converted! The "blasphemer and persecutor, the insolent and overbearing man" (I Tim. i.13, J.N.D.) became one of the most humble and gracious of the Lord's followers. Although as far as we know he had not met the Lord Jesus in the flesh, he acquired such an appreciation of the moral beauty of the Person of Christ in His humble life here that it was his joy to bring this blessed One before the believers as the example to follow. In Phil. ii. he writes, "Let nothing be done in the spirit of strife or vainglory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves". (J.N.D.). And again, to the assembly at Rome he writes, "For I say, through the grace which has been given to me, to everyone that is among you, not to have high thoughts above what he should think; but to think so as to be wise, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith" (Rom. xii.3, J.N.D.).

It is beautiful to see that what Paul preached he practised! The qualities he desired to see in others were consistently shown in his own life. To illustrate this let us select four passages from his epistles, in which we shall see that in every case he attributes all to the sovereign grace of God.

First, I Tim. i.12-15. After frankly confessing that he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor, he adds, "but mercy was shown me because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief. **But the grace of our Lord** surpassingly overabounded with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." Then he comes to that grand statement of the gospel, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief.**" The wondrous grace which had saved him so wrought in him that he could thus speak of himself as the chief of sinners. He takes his place in the foremost rank of sinners, and magnifies the grace which had appointed him to the ministry of the gospel. To save such a man, so full of animosity and hatred, God's long-suffering was extended to its limit, and thus the conversion of Saul of Tarsus becomes a pattern or delineation

of that grace of God which now goes out to Jew and Gentile alike.

The second passage is I Cor. xv.8-10. In the early verses of this most important chapter, the apostle lays down the basic truths of the gospel; Christ died for our sins, He was buried and rose again, and was seen by many accredited witnesses. After enumerating these witnesses of the Resurrection he adds, "And last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time". The word used here, "as to an abortion" (J.N.D.) suggests one born *before* the time, and it would seem the apostle is looking on to the glorious day of Christ's millennial kingdom when His people Israel will look upon Him Whom they pierced, and the nation will be born in a day. Paul had been privileged to see the risen Lord before the time of Israel's blessing.

He goes on "For I am **the least of the apostles**, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." He could never forget that he had once been a bitter enemy of Christ and a persecutor of the assembly, and because of this he regarded himself as the very least of the apostles. At the same time he could rejoice in the astonishing grace that had made him what he was — Christ's messenger of the gospel to the Gentiles. So he says, "**But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**" (v. 10).

We come now to the third passage, Eph. iii.7,8. In this chapter Paul shows that he has been called of God to unfold what was quite new in the ways of God, that the Gentiles should be brought in on the same footing as the Jews, to be "joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings." (v.6, J.N.D.) As the apostle thinks of this great purpose of God, to take up Gentiles as well as Jews and put them on common ground as members of the body of Christ, he marvels at the grace which entrusted such an administration to such an one as himself. He says, "**To me, less than the least of all saints**, has

**this grace** been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ." (v.8, J.N.D.).

"Chief of sinners", "least of the apostles", "less than the least of all saints", can the apostle go lower in the estimation of himself? Let us turn to our fourth passage, 2 Cor.xii, and see how this humble man, in whom the lowly mind of the Master was so beautifully reflected, does indeed go lower even than "the least of all saints".

There were those at Corinth who were disparaging the apostle, even questioning his apostleship. Paul's lowly walk, his devoted service in the gospel, his willing and cheerful acceptance of suffering and privation as he followed on in the path of his Master, did not mark him out as an apostle in the eyes of many who were quick to criticize and scorn. Yet in sober truth he could claim, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing". (v.11). He could say, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong". What was it that sustained this faithful man in his pathway of continual suffering? In view of the abundant revelations granted to him, the Lord had sent him "a thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble. Three times he had besought the Lord to take it away, but the Lord had answered with this wonderful assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness". Here then, was Paul's secret. This was always his resource — the ever abiding sufficiency of the Lord's grace. So Paul concludes, "Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may dwell (or tabernacle) upon me".

Shall not *we*, then, give heed to the exhortation of the apostle in I Cor. xi.1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," so that the lowly mind of Christ (Phil. ii.5) may be more vividly set forth in our lives?

R. A. CREETH

## ALL THINGS NEW II

**The New Covenant.** Jer. xxxi.31-34; 2 Cor. iii.

Before we consider the further "new things" that God has in store for His heavenly people, let us turn to His "New Covenant" with His ancient people Israel. Here we shall find much that repeats, from a different standpoint, some of the same truths that we considered before. And whereas the Old Covenant dealt with man as he was, to see if he could produce fruit for God, the New Covenant reveals God acting according to His own mind, and carrying out His own purposes. It is thus new in that second sense of a new *kind* of covenant.

Human covenants invariably bind each party to do his share, and God's first covenant with Israel, i.e., the law of Moses, was of this kind. God undertook to make Israel His peculiar treasure if they, in turn, would obey His commandments (Ex. xix.5). This, of course, they utterly failed to do, and the covenant broke down.

The New Covenant is of quite a different kind, for it consists entirely of what God binds Himself to do for Israel. It lies in the future — for Jesus is the mediator, not Moses (Heb. viii.6; xii.24), and hence it awaits Israel's turning in repentance to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. The prophet says "a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah", for the whole nation was to be included; but in giving the terms of the covenant God says "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel" — the divided nation is a thing of the past. "After those days I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

There is nothing conditional here: **all is of God**, and hence all is certain. God still speaks of His law, for the law cannot



be abrogated, but shall be fulfilled (Matt. v.17). But what is meant by God's law written in the heart? It surely means a nature which *desires* to please God. Does not the prophetic Spirit put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus in Psalm xl the words "Thy law is within my heart"? Such a nature in fallen man is only produced by God's own working in mighty power by His Spirit. It is, in fact, the **New Birth**.

Then, the promise of their becoming God's peculiar treasure will no longer be dependent upon their obedience, but (what is not revealed in Jeremiah's prophecy) will be secured by the blood of Jesus — "My blood of the New Covenant" to use His words (Matt. xxvi.28). God says, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people". He will be their God in every way — not merely the God whom they acknowledge, but the source of all their blessings, the provider of all their needs, their protector, and the object of their hearts' worship and joy.

The next promise is "they shall all know me" — all without exception. We recall that the Lord Jesus says that this knowledge is eternal life (John xvii.3). But though the believer in this day enjoys this knowledge, it has never been true of any *nation*, as it will be true of every member of redeemed Israel. See also Isaiah liv.13.

Lastly, the forgiveness of all their sins — complete and perfect justification before God — the same blessing, of course, which every believer in the Lord Jesus is entitled to know.

Thus far, then, it is clear that in Christ the believer today has all the New Covenant blessings. But the resemblance between Israel's portion and the Christian's finishes at this point. For Israel's place will be on earth, their blessings full and complete here, whereas the Christian's true life is hidden with Christ in glory, and its character will not be manifested till He appears again.

## LETTER AND SPIRIT

Now let us turn to 2 Cor. iii. This is a somewhat difficult chapter, which at first sight is quite unconnected with

Jeremiah's prophecy, save for the mention of the New Covenant in verse 6.

The glory of Christ's salvation, and the knowledge that He had wrought a mighty work in the Corinthians, in spite of their rather unsatisfactory response, is the theme Paul begins with. His own part in this, he says, should have been enough to commend him to them — no letter of commendation was called for in *his* case. In fact, he says, they were Christ's own letter, not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. And he adds, "not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart".

The progress of his thought is clear: at Sinai God had written upon tables of stone, but now He had written in the hearts of men. This is the same contrast, in essence, as in Jeremiah's prophecy, between, on the one hand, that legal code to which the people must conform if they were to obtain God's blessing; and on the other, God's own working in saving power by His Spirit in their hearts.

In what sense were they called Christ's epistle? Is it not that they were Christ's message to men, that the truth of Christ, the life of Christ, was being displayed in the changed lives of those who owned Him as Lord and Saviour? To be Christ's "letter of commendation" to the world around — that is God's purpose for the Christian! How do *we* answer to this?

If we return to the contrast between the two covenants we find Paul saying that God had made him and his associates competent as ministers of the New Covenant; "not of letter, but of spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life".

Now it is impossible to understand the chapter unless we see that "letter" here refers to the law, written in letters of stone, i.e., the Old Covenant, while "spirit" means the New Covenant. The "letter" addressed itself to the flesh, the natural man, but inasmuch as he could not keep its commands, it could not but condemn him. The "spirit" is of a different character altogether, it is a spiritual work, the fruit of Christ's work on the cross, and wrought out by God's

Spirit in the hearts of believers. Hence Paul adds, "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life".

It is helpful to compare the way the Lord Jesus speaks of "the spirit" in John vi.63. He says, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life".

In 2 Cor. iii.7-16 there is a parenthesis in which other aspects of this contrast are considered; but in verse 17 Paul sums up by saying "Now the Lord is the spirit," that is, all that God is now doing is centred in the Lord Jesus; His blood is our refuge, His life is ours, He is our pattern. He said to the disciples, "This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you".

### THE PARENTHESIS

In the parenthesis in verses 7-16 Paul uses the circumstances accompanying the introduction of the law to emphasize the superiority of the ministry of "the spirit". When Moses (the second time) came down from his communion with God bearing the tables of stone, his face shone so that the people were afraid. So when (not "till", as in the A.V.) he had finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. This veil he removed when he went into the tabernacle to speak to the Lord.

"The letter", then, Paul says, was introduced with glory, but this could not last. Man could not face it, for it condemned him. But in Christ we have a ministry of life, not death; a ministry of righteousness, not condemnation. Its glory therefore far surpasses that of "the letter". Then also, because it depends on God's working, not man's, it is an abiding glory. **Where do we look to see that glory? We see it in the face of Jesus**, the mediator of the New Covenant, Who is seated in the glory of God. Righteousness and life flow to us from Him, and soon His glory also will be shared with us.

Throughout what we call the Old Testament the blessings of the new regime of "the spirit" are foreshadowed, but the Jews, when they read, cannot see them. It is as though a

veil lies over their understanding, for they cannot see Christ in these figures. But when they turn to the Lord (like Moses as he went into the tabernacle) the veil will disappear.

Another feature which is referred to in verse 13 is that Moses' veil hid from the people the fact that the shining of his face eventually disappeared. This symbolizes their failure to understand that the legal dispensation itself could not last. For the law is not God's last word — He always had grace in reserve: His "secret things". As Moses said to Israel, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those which are revealed belong unto us and our children." But now that grace has been revealed, there is no more reserve, nothing hidden. There is much that we cannot understand, because of our limitations, but in the Lord Jesus God has declared all that is in His heart. That is why there can be no hope for those who reject Him. Thus Paul says, "Having such hope, we use great plainness of speech".

### TRANSFORMATION

If the purpose of God is to have all things according to His own mind, what pattern does He intend for the Christian? This too He has plainly revealed: nothing other than Christ Jesus, the glorified Man. Nothing less can satisfy the heart of God, than that His children should be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be Firstborn among many brethren (Rom. viii.29).

When by faith we look up to see our glorified Lord, there is no intervening veil of uncertainty or of fear. **And if indeed our hearts are engaged with Him**, we shall be transformed into His image, from day to day. "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." (J.N.D., verse 18). E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH

The Lord Jesus Himself often spoke of His coming again.

Once He said, "Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait for their own lord . . . . that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately" (Luke xii.35,36). The attitude of the servant who is waiting, so to speak, with hand on the latch of the door, is the proper attitude for everyone who loves the Lord and whose heart beats loyal and true for Him during His absence.

Do we sometimes forget Him and the promise of His coming again? Alas! we do, but as the compass-needle turns instinctively and inevitably towards the north, so the true and normal aspiration of the Christian will always be towards that nearing moment when we shall all see our blessed Lord face to face. And even if the needle be for a moment agitated during storms and tempest, or be caused by some magnetic influence to deviate for a while, it soon swings back and regains its normal position. So it is with the believer: the coming of Christ is the centre of attraction for his soul's desires. To be with Christ is the pole-star which governs and regulates the Christian's life and heart; this is the object and end of his most cherished hopes.

When the Lord was just about to leave this world to go to the Father, He poured the oil of consolation into the hearts of His troubled disciples by assuring them of His return: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv.3). And again, when risen and glorified on high, He finally, in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation presents Himself to His own as the bright and morning Star, and assures them of His speedy return in these words, "Surely, I come (am coming) quickly" (Revelation xxii.16,20).

Truly, the coming of the Lord is an event of immense importance. It is without precedent or parallel in the world's history. It is entirely outside the discoveries and calculations of men of science. This event rests solely upon the word of the Lord Himself, and is the bright and blessed hope set before the church of God. The Lord said at the grave of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;

and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die". He in His own Person is the first-fruits of the harvest of the grave, the pledge that the rest of it shall follow in due time.

The power of resurrection-life has been already displayed in the risen Christ: He *is* the resurrection and the life. Only one thing is needed for a further display of this power: His coming again. He the Victor over death and the grave will appear again upon the scene. Then the victorious power of life will be applied, not only as now to the souls of His people, but to their bodies also, for then the saints will be raised or changed in a moment and will be clothed with bodies like His own body of glory.

There is, as regards this fact, no uncertainty in scripture; the word of God is as clear as it is precise and unequivocal concerning this fact. Already Christ *is* our life; and when He comes again, we shall enter, as to our bodies also, into the full participation of that life.

It is true that the church during many centuries lost this hope, and as a consequence, the church also lost its proper heavenly character as a witness of the coming of Christ. But in our days the truth of this precious hope has been recovered. And what sort of persons in manner of life and in godliness ought we to be who possess such a treasure! What practical power this hope of the Lord's coming should have to form our life and walk and to regulate our conduct both in the church and in the world!

This great truth, however, is still unheeded by the vast majority of men. And we may surely believe that there is in this respect a close analogy between the first coming and the second coming of our Lord Jesus. Both times His coming is unexpected, and He is opposed when He does come.

When the Lord came the first time, He appeared among men in lowly, humble grace. The great world of that day cared little or nothing about Him. The Idumean king then reigning in the land of Israel, jealous for his own position and honours, sought to slay the Child of Bethlehem. The great religious leaders of the nation — the chief priests,

scribes, and elders, the Pharisees and Sadducees — were either bitterly hostile or loftily and utterly indifferent to Jesus of Nazareth.

Nevertheless, though He came into the world that had its being through Him, and yet knew Him not (John i.10,11), God prepared the hearts of a little remnant in Israel to receive Him as the Messiah. Aged Simeon in the temple took the Babe in his arms and gave thanks to God because he was looking upon the Lord's Christ, his soul's worship overflowing to God in the presence of such wonderful grace. So also the aged prophetess, Anna, gave praise to the Lord, and spake of Him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke ii.25-38). Still these and other expectant ones were but few and feeble and were despised and unknown in Israel, but they were not disappointed. At the appointed moment the Hope of Israel came to them, and they rejoiced.

And what would the Lord find if He returned today? He would find men in general careless, thoughtless, and indifferent concerning Him; and the religious world (so-called) occupied for the most part with humdrum formalities and lifeless routine apart from Him. Alas, the Lord would find also the mass of religious leaders teaching ritualism, modernism, and other evil doctrines which overturn the very foundations of the Christian faith. Already, Christendom seems ripe for His judgment. How solemn!

May *our* hearts ever say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

F. G. BURKITT

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## **THE CHURCH OF GOD — A SELECT COMPANY?**

The Church of God is not a citadel for the strong only, nor a niche for the wise and intelligent only; it is not a front bench for those who have arrived at a certain maturity of holiness any more than of knowledge. He would have me always contemplate all saints (save those in sin or evil

*(Continued on inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## **BURDEN-BEARERS**

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians vi.2)*

Burden-bearers are we all,  
Great and small.

Burden-sharers be ye all,  
Great and small!

Where another shares the load,  
Two draw nearer God.

Yet there are burdens we can share with none,  
Save God;

And paths remote where we must walk alone,  
With God;

For lonely burden and for path apart—  
Thank God!

If these but serve to bring the burdened heart  
To God.

From **BEEES IN AMBER**, by John Oxenham.

(With acknowledgments and thanks to Messrs. Methuen & Co. Ltd., publishers.)

## ALL THINGS NEW

### RENEWAL AFTER FAILURE

*Call to remembrance the former days (Heb. x.32).*

The Christian life begins with a fundamental spiritual renewal, a coming to the Lord and receiving from Him forgiveness and cleansing from sin, a new life in Christ and the new power of the Spirit. A new found joy in the Saviour provides a stimulus to live so as to please Him, and for a time all goes well. We love His word, we love to meet with His people and sing His praise. But the devil is cunning, and knows from long experience that the freshness and newness are apt to wear off; the unrenewed old nature, which the Bible calls "the flesh", is easily provoked into action by the temptations he provides, and before we know where we are, we find ourselves behaving just as we used to do before we came to Christ. Old sins, old ways of thinking, perhaps old worldly attractions that we thought we had no more use for -- these things come trickling or perhaps flooding back into our lives.

Well is it for us then if there is at hand an older believer with a shepherd's heart and shepherd's gift to lead back the straying lamb! The Lord's first instruction to Peter as He began to reinstate him after his denials was "*Feed My lambs*", and this indicates that the healing work is best done by ministering the "sincere milk of the word", so as to awaken afresh the appetite for heavenly things. The "washing of water by the word" (Eph. v.26) is not just a matter of pointing out a believer's errors, but of warming his heart by the word which tells of divine love and goodness, so that he is turned away from the things by which he had been led astray.

Now when we come back in heart to the Saviour Whom we have turned away from and grieved, the first thing to remember is that our standing in God's favour depends not on ourselves, but on His grace towards us, which can reach us because Christ has died to put away our sins. Even though we have again fallen into sin, the cleansing power of the

blood of Christ remains as true as ever. Only, a righteous God demands righteousness in His children, and if we have failed to maintain this, it is essential to confess it all to Him. Then, as His word says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John i.9).

He is *faithful* and constant in His love to us, for His love burns steadily, not like the fitful flame of our love to Him. He is *just*, i.e., righteous, because the blood of Christ has established the righteousness of blotting out the believer's sins. Now cleansing from *all* unrighteousness includes not only removing the guilt of sin, which the blood of Christ makes sure, but also giving us that moral strengthening which makes us reject and abhor the sin itself. For this it is essential that we confess our sins, not in a vague, general way, but as far as we can, in detail, asking the Lord to show us just where we went wrong. The scripture says, "Let a man examine himself" (I Cor.xi.28). But having done this, we shall get no strength from dwelling on our failure, lest we become proud of our humility! Let us rather turn our thoughts to the Saviour Himself, now that we have cause to value even more fully all that He has done for us. "He that is dwelling in Him does not sin", John says (I John iii.6).

Now it does happen that a believer is not so soon restored. Some have strayed so far, and so long, that their very claim to be believers is open to question. Or, if not straying into open sin, they may have lost their desire for the things of the Lord. To all such the word says, "Call to remembrance the former days" (Heb.x.32).

This call was originally addressed to Hebrew Christians who had suffered much for Christ when they first believed. Since then, the unbelief of their fellow Jews had caused them to doubt the truth which they had once professed. Perhaps they thought that Christ should have come back by then. But whatever the cause, the remedy was to recall the former days. So it is for us, if we have grown weary or turned aside. **Let us remember the Saviour's love as we once knew it, for**

**He has not changed.** If we were dealing in human affairs, we might indeed consider it impossible to get back the joy we once had. But just as we once turned away gladly from our futile efforts to perform what we knew to be right, to rest in what He had done for us, so let us turn back to Him, that He may renew in us the faith and joy we formerly knew. For His word is, "Behold, I make all things new." This is what He began in us, and this is what He will complete, if only we will entrust our souls to Him.

How touchingly He speaks to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer.ii.2). He remembered those who had sought Him then, and so we may be sure the Lord Jesus does not forget the time when we turned to Him from a desert world, that continues to reject Him, confessing Him as our Lord and Saviour. If in His grace He remembers our love, shall we not ask Him to renew it?

In Revelation ii. we find a letter from the risen Lord to the church at Ephesus. He says, after commending their service and testimony, "Nevertheless I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love."

Now we often read the word "left" here as if it were "lost" — that is, that their love had lost its first fervour. But that is not what the Lord said. He meant, that now they had turned to another lover than Himself. In spite of their record of diligent service, some object other than Himself had secured their hearts' devotion. His love for them detected this, and it grieved Him. So He calls them to remember from whence they had fallen, and to repent, and do the first works.

Repent! That is, give heed to His word, which judges our ways. What is it, let us ask ourselves, which has taken His place in our affections? We must, if our conscience tells us that this word is for us, give our own answer to the question. Having found the answer, and acknowledged it, shall we not thank Him from our hearts that He has not cast us off, but

continues to rebuke us as those whom He loves? It is the remembrance and the contemplation of His own great love for us which will be effective in restoring our heart's allegiance to Him.

Then He says, "and do the first works". Why *works*? we may ask. Are not our affections more important than our works? Now love, in the Bible, is always a *doing*, not just a feeling. So that if we still find coldness in our hearts, the remedy is to turn to His word and see that we make it our first care to obey His commands. For His word is, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John xiv.21). If we do this, if we set our minds to please Him, we may be sure that the Lord will not fail to warm our hearts with the fire of His own love.

### PROMISE TO THE OVERCOMER

The Lord's promise to the overcomer in this epistle is very significant. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Now the tree of life in paradise is of course a symbol of the Lord Himself, for He is the source and sustainer of that eternal life which we have in Him. To eat of the tree of life then means being near to Him, having communion with Him, feeding our souls on that continual unfolding of His own perfections which will be our portion throughout eternal ages. And though we may understand but little of it now, we know enough to be sure that this will be the very essence of the joy of heaven. We know from His own words (John xvii.3) that the knowledge of God, displayed in His Son, is what characterizes eternal life. The more Christ Himself is the occupation of our hearts now, the greater will be our capacity in heaven to enjoy the fruit of the Tree of Life.

### RENEWING THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVICE

In John xxi. we find another kind of renewal. Peter, by his denial of Jesus, had forfeited any *claim* he might have had by reason of having left all to follow Him (Matt.

xix.27). We may surmise that when the Lord appeared to him on the resurrection day (Luke xxiv.34) He assured him of forgiveness; yet Peter might still with reason have doubted where he stood as regards his apostleship. But in this chapter we read how the Lord reinstates him publicly. Such is the grace of our Saviour!

First, however, He searches Peter's heart with the thrice repeated question "Lovest thou Me?" Peter had protested "Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee", yet he had denied three times. So the Lord gives him the opportunity of confessing his love three times. And this could but wring from Peter the tacit acknowledgment of his failure to prove his love. He had to say, "Yea Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Yet each time the Lord responds with a fresh token of confidence in His servant. He says, "Feed My lambs" — "Shepherd My sheep" — "Feed My sheep".

Does not this teach us plainly that love for our Saviour is the only possible basis of acceptable service? A sense of duty is not sufficient, except insofar as we understand "duty" as what is *due* to the Lord's own love towards us. True, our love often fails, as Peter's did, so that like him, we have to fall back on the Lord's knowledge of us: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that we love Thee." But if this leads us to cast ourselves more completely on Him, we shall find Him always ready to renew in us that spring of love which makes us just that little bit more like Him. And if the service He wants from us is ministry to the needs of others, whatever form this may take, then it will be fruitful if, and only if, we see it as the ministry of His own love to them, though channelled through us.

E. H. Chamberlain

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"* (John v.17).

Luke xvi.14, "The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and mocked Him." The Pharisees stayed, it would seem, with the object of accumulating more

evidence of His teaching which could be considered by their sect as contrary to the law. It was essential, to them, to protect their covetous interests. These were based on intimidation and misrepresentation of the law. "Ye are they who justify themselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what amongst men is highly thought of is an abomination before God" (v. 15). They professed to serve God but were, in fact, bondslaves to mammon. Jesus had said in their hearing, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (v.13). They were discerned and revealed before all. "God knows your hearts" — a solemn thought indeed.

It is here that the Lord re-affirms what John the Baptist had proclaimed — the closure of the period of test under the law. "The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God are announced, and everyone forces his way into it" (v.16). They justified themselves before men, but the prophets had shown the impossibility of justification by the law since they had broken it. Their resistance to faith and their opposition to the grace of God, in His response to repentance, raised powerful barriers to entry into the Kingdom of God. The power of faith, however, is such that it can force its way into that Kingdom, finding itself in company with *all* "of like precious faith" (2 Pet. i.1).

Time has not changed the ways of men. The law, which would have brought them, in their failure, to Christ in repentance, was diverted in its purpose to support their national aspirations and to add to their personal prestige. John, the last of the prophets, had raised his voice, calling for repentance, but he cried in a wilderness. Now they were in the presence of the One Who was "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes" (Rom. x.4), the One Who, being made sin for us, submitted to the penalty of the law in laying down His life.

Verse 17. "But it is easier that the heaven and the earth should pass away than that one tittle of the law should fail." Faith establishes the law. It is enabled to discern in it the



righteous principles that God is pleased to reveal to man. Truth embodies and supports the law. How clearly and emphatically the Lord Jesus makes His declaration to those who used the law for their own purposes! The warnings of the law were neglected. Attempts to keep it failed and its penalties were disregarded. None could be *justified* by it for none could *keep it*.

In further emphasis of this truth He continues "Every one who puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery." In His day there were two schools of thought in wide divergence. The school of Shammai restricted divorce to cases of moral delinquency on the part of the woman while that of Hillel extended it to trifling things. To act in accord with man's thought, and for his convenience and profit, was to make the law of God ineffectual and, though "highly thought of", was "an abomination before God." For the licentious, it was but a matter of meeting the cost of a bill of divorce to remain within the law. While exposing the hypocrisy of those who used the law for prestige and financial gain, the Lord steadfastly upheld the law in all its purity and divine perfection.

Verse 19. As was so often His way, the divine Worker gives a word-picture of the Pharisaical character and the consequences of its domination. It is a vivid picture — far-reaching in its significance. "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." Jesus thus portrayed the Pharisees in all the well-being of their covetous class. Despite their pretence of rigorous holiness, the character of God was not evident in their lives. "And there was a poor man named Lazarus ('without help') who was laid at his gateway full of sores, and desiring to be filled with the crumbs which fell from the table of the rich man; but the dogs also coming licked his sores" (v.20.JND). Lying at their gate — touching their lives, there when they entered and when they returned — with pariah dogs, the scavengers, as attendant physicians, the poor sufferer represented the remnant of a nation once

united and, in the purpose of God, intended for His own expression of righteous behaviour before men. The Lord Jesus shows, in unmistakable contrast, these two lives. It was not just an emphasis upon riches as compared with poverty. It was also an indictment of those who controlled the wealth of revealed truth while restricting the outflow to those who needed it — and this with covetous intent for gain. The poor man is shown to be helpless — with no possibility of energy or human resource and no pretence of strength to rise above his position of poverty. He was a picture of those without support by the law — an object for mercy and grace. “For when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. v.6). The rich man gathered about him that wealth which was regarded as a sign of God’s approval. He relied upon this wealth and displayed it as a personal accomplishment — as a reward of holiness. Though he would represent otherwise, God was not in it.

Time passes, but the word-picture continues into the aftermath of life. “And it came to pass that the poor man died and that he was carried away by the angels into the bosom of Abraham” (v.22). Here again, no human energy is shown. There is no mention of burial. The vehicle of suffering is left. It is himself who is carried to the realisation of an affection and a welcome hitherto unknown. It is as though the father of the faithful looked forward to the moment of communion with a soul whose patient waiting in faith is now rewarded. “For it was not by law that the promise was to Abraham, or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, but by righteousness of faith” (Rom. iv.13). The listeners were Jews. To them, the bosom of Abraham would symbolize blessing and honour indeed. It is one of those precious instances in which the Lord Jesus uses words expressly framed to reach the understanding, as well as the vocabulary, of those who heard Him.

“The rich man also died and was buried.” There, tersely stated, is the closure of his record of self-interest. His chosen way had ended in burial, from which his wealth failed to

protect him. "In hades lifting up his eyes, being in torments, he sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Man is reluctant to consider the after-life. He will do much to prolong his present life. He depends upon it for his comforts and pleasures. He resents its sorrows and disappointments. The Lord Jesus uses expressions to show the fallacy and the danger of this attitude. The resources of the rich man are gone. He is left with a sense of irreparable loss. Abraham is "afar off" and he is aware of this. Lazarus, hitherto unnoticed, is discerned in the place of affection and nearness to Abraham and there is now no means of association between them. He asks for compassion which, on earth he had never shown. Memories are revived for him, but his wealth of good things was no sign that he was acceptable with God.

The Lord Jesus is not giving a picture of the final judgment. He shows to His disciples, and also to those who deride Him, that unrepentant self-sufficiency is in opposition to the mind of God. Since, during life, no association with God is sought or desired, none is possible in the hades of grief when life is done and the soul becomes aware of its doom. This is very dreadful to contemplate and one cannot but wonder as to the effect of the words upon those who heard them.

Having first sought compassion for himself he pleads the cause of his family from across the "great gulf fixed" and is told, finally, that "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, not even if one rises from among the dead will they be persuaded." It was a message and a warning to Israel, as represented by their leaders, in words from Abraham in the Lord's story. Soon would they be shown to be true in fact. The "brethren" of the "rich man" would come and see one who at the word of Jesus had been called to rise from among the dead — and he, another Lazarus. But, far from being "persuaded", they would plan to kill both Lazarus and Jesus Himself.

There would surely be a note of sadness in the voice, increasing as the final phrases bring the solemn message to a close. The day would come when human eyes would see

Jesus risen from the dead, but there would be human hearts that would remain in unbelief.

Edward T. Wood

## THE FAITH OF ABIGAIL

(Read: 1 Samuel xxv.23-31)

Let us mark the features of Abigail's faith. All she says to David rests upon her appreciation of him as the anointed king of Israel. And it is the due appreciation of Christ in His grace and glory which forms the believer's true judgment of affairs. In every respect and at all times the Christian bows to the paramount position God has given to His Anointed and Glorified Son.

Abigail owns David's title of sovereignty as derived from God. She perceives his personal perfection among men, and the sure house that would be according to all the good God had spoken of him. She sees David fighting the battles of Jehovah, where others see him as a rebel against Saul. All this she utters from her heart at the feet of David himself. She sees him with the eyes of faith.

Abigail judges the unbelief of Nabal, her husband, and regards him as already judged of God for his folly. With her, everything is judged according to its connection with David. Nabal's judgment Jehovah accomplished ten days later, although he was at peace in his own house, and David was an exile from the court and an outcast in the land. Nevertheless the existing relation of Abigail to Nabal is recognised until God executes His judgment upon him.

In her faith Abigail judges Saul upon the throne, the enemy of David (verse 29). She regards him only as a "man", for to her faith David is the rightful king, and would be preserved to wear his crown. So she says, "If a man is risen up to pursue thee and to seek thy life, the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out from the hollow of the sling."

Abigail's chief desire is that when David is in due course

invested with his kingdom, he will remember her who acknowledged his title when he was a fugitive from the murderous hands of Saul. So she pleaded, "when Jehovah shall deal well with my lord, then remember thy handmaid". David came before the ties of her present household.

Jonathan, the son of Saul, loved David, while he knew that, not himself, but the son of Jesse would sit upon the throne of Israel. "I shall be next unto thee," said Jonathan. But David abode in the wood, and the prince returned to the palace of Saul, already doomed. In that order of things which God had judged (a judgment that the faith of such as Abigail recognised) Jonathan remained with his family and shared its ruin.

It is important for the Christian to mark the principle underlying the conduct of Abigail and of Jonathan. The former confessed and followed Jehovah's anointed king; the latter confessed him also, but forsook him, continuing with a system under the ban of God. Each believer must choose between Christ and official Christianity, which is in the world and of the world. God has condemned this system by His word, but for the present withholds the righteous judgment upon it that He has foretold.

Many believers are aware that the authority of the Lord Jesus is not acknowledged in the professing church as its supreme and rightful Head. Two courses of conduct are possible: either that of Jonathan or that of Abigail. Jonathan loved David and owned him heir to the throne, but perished with Saul on Mount Gilboa. Abigail in faith braved the wrath of her unbelieving husband, acknowledged David as Jehovah's anointed king, and David made her his wife. Let it be remembered that "faith without works is dead" (James ii. 26): living faith wrought in Abigail, as it previously had done in Abraham, the friend of God, and in Rahab, the harlot of Jericho.

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from *The Bible Monthly*, 1948)

## “SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD”

(Mark xiv.8)

Dear fellow Christian, what a portion is ours in Christ! What grace that we have been brought to know Him, Whom to know is life eternal!

If we look around at what is going on in the world, or even in the Church, we may well be despondent, but if we look above, where Jesus is, we shall be given strength and grace to follow Him during the interval that remains ere we see His face.

“The time is short!” Only in this life shall we be able to render any service to Him. “Only one life, ’twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”

A very dear Christian who was related to me was well known and loved in the little town in which he lived. He brought cheer to many. He had to work hard and for long hours, though he was frail in health. Often he used to say, “It will be lovely to see my Saviour, but I must not be selfish; with His help I must continue to do what I can to bring others to Christ, and to impart some little help and cheer to His own. Our Lord commended one for having done what she could. I seek no other commendation”.

A. E. BIRD

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**Question.** A recent article (Reverence in Worship, October 1972) points out that the Levites of the family of Kohath were divinely appointed to carry the Ark; yet in crossing the Jordan, and at the capture of Jericho, it is “the priests the Levites” that were to carry it. Why is this?

**Answer.** First, let us be clear that Aaron himself was a Levite, and also a Kohathite. But the priests had to be of Aaron’s direct line. In Numbers iv. the duty of carrying the Ark is laid upon the remaining Kohathites, who were not priests.

Now the same God Who gave the *general* instruction evidently varied it in these two cases, for special reasons, as only He could. It is legitimate for us to enquire what His reasons were, but one can only *suggest* the answer.

The Ark on these two occasions was not merely being transported from place to place, as on an ordinary journey of the Israelites. As the symbol of God's throne, it represented His presence among His people. In crossing the Jordan, it led the way, and the river dried up as soon as the priests' feet touched the water. How plain that Jehovah did it! We, today, may go further and see it as a type of Christ going into the waters of death for us, and ourselves associated with Him in this. So again, at the capture of Jericho, Jehovah was their Leader.

In confirmation of the correctness of this explanation is the direction in Numbers ii. that in the ordinary journeys of Israel, six tribes were to precede the Ark, and six to follow it — the Ark was not to lead the way. Thus the two occasions of the question were in every way special. The priests, having been appointed by God as His representatives, were naturally employed as porters on these two occasions.

E.H.C.

## THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

Much of the wisdom of these proverbs is lost to us because translators have failed to catch their meaning. This is one case where other translations can be helpful.

For example, Prov. x.10 A.V. reads, "He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall".

R.S.V. reads, "He who winks with the eye causes trouble, but he who boldly reproves makes peace". Here the second half is from the Greek Septuagint translation, which the New Testament often quotes from.

N.E.B. reads, "To wink at a fault causes trouble;  
a frank rebuke leads to peace."

This last version appears to have grasped the meaning. While the N.E.B. is not generally to be relied on, let us use it where it has value. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. v.21).

E.H.C.

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## **PROVERBS OF SOLOMON, continued**

Hebrew poetry is noted for its *parallelism*, and the Proverbs are good examples of this. Each proverb has two parts, and the second sets off the first, usually by a contrast. Hence if this parallelism of meaning appears to be lacking, it may be a sign of faulty translation. For example, Prov.xxi.15, in the A.V. reads

“It is a joy to the just to do judgment:  
but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.”

Here the two parts do not seem to hang together.

The R.S.V. reads

“When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous,  
but dismay to evildoers.”

N.E.B. reads

“When justice is done, all good men rejoice,  
but it brings ruin to evildoers.”

The contrast here is vivid.

E.H.C.

Correction. In our January issue, page 2, a line was omitted from the quotation of Jeremiah's prophecy, perhaps leading the reader to think the abbreviation intentional. It should have read, “They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them.” We regret any confusion resulting from this.

## EDITORIAL

As readers will doubtless have noticed, **Words of Help** continues still the practice of close adherence to the scriptures in its articles. Men's thoughts and ideas, even if based on the Word of God, can never command our obedience; the function of a magazine such as this is therefore to make clear what the message of the Word itself is. There are many who feel, like the eunuch, that they need guidance in order to understand fully its teaching, and there are few (are there any?) who cannot profit by the ministry of their fellow believers.

There must be many who are gifted to write profitably who perhaps have never considered doing so. There may be some whom bodily weakness now keeps at home, whose meditations on the Bible would provide help and encouragement to others. Any such are cordially invited to contribute to **Words of Help**.

Another most useful contribution would be by way of questions. That question, for example, which was not satisfactorily cleared up at the Bible Reading — why not see if any from the wider circle of **Words of Help** readers could help?

### HAGAR, SARAI'S MAID

(Read Genesis xvi and xxi. 9-21)

As handmaid of Sarai this poor girl is spoken of correctly in the New Testament as a bondwoman. By nationality she was an Egyptian and by status a slave. As the handmaid of the wife of a very influential man it may be supposed that she was intelligent, young, attractive and alert. Perhaps it was her pleasant manner that had secured for her the position of personal servant to Sarai. Because Hagar lived amongst people of affluence and importance she is apt to be overlooked as an individual. This is especially so because of the reference to her in Galatians iv.30 as the bondwoman who was cast out. The typical teaching in the scripture

concerning this young woman is for us very necessary instruction but her underprivileged position and all it entailed should not of necessity lead us to undervalue her own personality.

When Sarai as Abram's wife had ceased to have hope of a child of her own she decided to manage the domestic affairs in her own way by giving to Abram her bondwoman Hagar to be his wife. This apparent favour to Hagar brought years of sorrow to Sarai, Abram, Hagar and eventually to the child Ishmael. Hagar's promotion from handmaid to wife and then to expectant mother struck deeply at Sarai's position and, perhaps naturally, Hagar saw herself climbing into the ascendancy. The narrative shows how Abram recognised Sarai's complete control over Hagar and when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Here is a striking example of what can happen when in the home-life we take matters into our own hands and do not wait upon God for His time and His guidance. Sarai's "wrong" had adversely affected Abram and now Hagar takes independent action in seeking to gain her freedom. She had gone to the well in the wilderness of Shur and was probably feeling that with freedom she could return to her own land and manage her own affairs but it was at that well that the Angel of the Lord found her. His questions "Whence camest thou?" and "Whither wilt thou go?" bring from her a simple confession that she was a runaway slave with none to love her, no future, no hope. When circumstances oppress or there is continuous persecution how easily the desire to escape can rise in the mind of any one of us! Here it is interesting to note that the Angel shows the way of blessing. "Return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands", and to this there is added the promise of a son to be called Ishmael — meaning "God shall hear, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction". If the hard words and behaviour of her mistress had raised no sympathy for her in the house of Abram they had been heard in heaven by the Lord God.

So Hagar returned, and no doubt submitted herself to her mistress but she called that well Beer-lahai-roi, "The well

of Him that liveth and seeth me". This is just one of many instances we find in the scripture which should encourage us to allow the Lord to have His way in our lives. It is in such moments of extremity when changing circumstances sweep away the little security we think we have gained in this world that we should do well to recall that there is One Who hears the affliction, and He is the Living One. Hagar had learned by first hand experience that the One Who Lives also hears, sees, speaks and has control of present as well as future.

In due time the son was born and Abram called his son's name Ishmael. In chapter xvii verse 18 Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" So Ishmael grew up in that household, no doubt in a favoured position, for more than thirteen years. Hagar is not much in evidence but surely her return to her mistress showed clearly obedience to God, and is an evidence of faith in the One she had come to know for herself. The faith engendered in her seems to be the key to her continuance.

In chapter 21 Hagar is again assailed by her adversary Sarah who now, with her own son Isaac, finds occasion to dismiss her rival from the camp. Abraham hesitates but again the Lord intervenes in the sorrows and confusion which the household had brought about by their own self willed actions. This time Hagar is set free by her master but freedom given by man is little more than destitution, and this brings the next great crisis in Hagar's life.

She may have felt that having returned to her mistress in obedience to God's instruction and having submitted to what she had previously endeavoured to avoid, she should have been entitled to a permanent residence, with dignity, amongst those who worshipped Jehovah — the One Who had claimed to hear the affliction as well as to see and speak to her at the well. We have to learn that life in this world is never settled for long; and how often, like Hagar, do we come into new circumstances which appear to reverse what clearly was the Lord's chosen path for us only a few years earlier! So in verse 14 we find her with her son

wandering in the wilderness of Beer-sheba, so called by Abraham who gave it that name when he made a covenant with the Philistines about the water reserves.

Now her case is worse than before — she has the responsibility of a teenage son. They have gone as far as they could. The water bottle is empty, there is no well and again no hope. On this occasion God speaks directly to her from heaven saying “Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad”. He opened her eyes and she saw a well of water from which she drew the water of life for them both.

Many of God’s people have passed through circumstances of which Hagar’s experience is a perfect exhibition. When all human help is withdrawn and disaster is imminent is the time when God is able to speak words of comfort, promise and life. We may have to be brought to this low state before God is able to open our eyes to let us see the true water of life and drink of its refreshment.

It was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who spoke to the woman at the well in John chapter iv. Suddenly she said, “Sir I perceive Thou art a prophet”, but a little later could say “Is not this the Christ?” He spoke of living water which when tasted becomes a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

God is unchanging and although we may sometimes remember Hagar only as a slave girl whose child was not the son of promise, let us also see God’s faithfulness and unfailing goodness to her and remember her obedience to His instructions, her many years of submission. If our simple responses are like hers then we may know the joy of drinking at the unseen well — “The well of Him that Liveth and seeth me”.

T. C. PACKER  
(Jack)

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke xvii. The sad history of the world shows repeated evidences of Satanic influence. The reference by the Lord

Jesus to the "Prince of this world" was no mere figure of speech. "The cool of the day" in Eden, when sinless man held communion with his Creator, was centuries past, and the Lord Jesus saw, as a Man among men, the evidences of opposition, Satanic in origin, still working in a disordered world. How well He knew this! It was the reason for His coming.

"And He said to His disciples, It cannot be but that offences come, but woe to him by whom they come!" He did not tell them that all would be well. There would be snares for those who, finding failure in themselves, and the helplessness of the law to do more than point to this failure, would turn to Him seeking the help of His grace. It is *these* whom He calls "little ones". They are precious to Christ. They have child-like faith in His all-sufficiency. It is they who are the occasion of joy in the heavenlies. To remain among the "little ones" is to know the companionship and protection of Christ. The Lord uses potent expressions of warning to any who would attempt to divert a "little one" from this character.

In writing to the Ephesians, Paul values this position for himself. "To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii.8). It was of GRACE and not of his own attainment. In writing to the Corinthians he says "I am the least of the apostles . . . but by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. xv.9,10). The Satanic inducement to Adam was "Ye shall be as gods", but to be in a position to give an expression of God to others the believer must be "little" in himself. It is the self-assertive who can display only self. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Is. lvii.15).

There is surely no experience to compare with this gracious in dwelling! The apostle uses the same thought, by the Spirit of God, when he writes to the Ephesians "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. iii.17). With aware-

ness, by faith, of this upholding—this indwelling—“offences” may be met and overcome.

Verse 3. The Lord Jesus makes clear to His disciples the distinction between the Pharisaical distortions and the true principles of God as affecting His people. “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother should sin, rebuke him; and if he should repent, forgive him.” The brother is one *near* to them. His sin could be overlooked. It would be the *easier* course. But the object of the rebuke is the *recovery* of the brother as well as to show dissociation from the sin. Moreover it needs far more grace to rebuke than to suffer the hurt of the sin. The spiritual outcome is a turning away from the evil in self-judgment before God. It is repentance — for which there is no substitute. In the world, a man may be sorry: he may apologize and, at the same time, find excuse and explanation. He may make restitution. But true repentance is actuated by the Spirit of God — it is self-condemnation. There is no limit to the grace of forgiveness which follows repentance. The disciples were exhorted to be like Him Whom they followed — for the grace of forgiveness was unknown to the legal world around them.

“Take heed to yourselves.” The Lord does not say be on the look-out for faults in others who may “sin against thee”. A test is sure to come. “Take heed to yourselves” — the thought is a looking *within*. He uses the same word as in Luke xxi.34, “Take heed to yourselves lest possibly your hearts be laden with surfeiting and drinking and cares of life.” The brother’s trespass might produce a general reaction of resentment — even of retaliation — instead of the true grace of forgiveness “seven times in a day”.

Verses 5,6: “The apostles said to Him, Give more faith to us.” It is as though they felt the great test with which they would be confronted. The flesh would be too strong — self-importance would be revealed. They might encounter a sevenfold repetition of the trespass, so He warned of the need for unwearied grace if they were to be imitators of their Master. They felt the need of a controlling power altogether beyond anything they themselves possessed. Energy of the



flesh is a hindrance to the working of faith. To have this faith in God in operation involves the discarding of any reliance upon natural resources. It places one in appropriate littleness, for the Lord shows faith as a tiny seed — yet infinite in power to remove the established tree rooted in the conceit of man's self-sufficiency.

They had said "Give more faith to us" as though they already had faith, though it were small. Jesus uses His metaphor to show clearly that quantity is not a substitute for quality. Faith — however small, tiny as a mustard seed, brought in the power of the living God and could overthrow the very course of nature. So, "Ye might say to this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." There were to be "sycamine trees" that would confront them as individuals — established and rooted in the soil of unbelief and national prejudice; but they could *experience* the power — even the victory — for one of them was to write, for the strengthening and encouragement of fellow believers, "This is the victory which overcometh the world — our faith" (I John v.4).

So faith in God would make them aware of His character of grace. The Lord Jesus is showing their need of it. Without it, the sycamine tree of self-importance would flourish. The evidence of this was all around them. The observance of the law with its strictures and penalties ministered to the conceit of a nation that had forgotten the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and others who, as elders, had obtained testimony from God (Heb. xi). The tiny seed of faith is sown in the soil of our acknowledged helplessness.

The wonder of grace becomes increasingly known as faith moves onward in the things of God. But it is a holy link with divine power, and forbids pride in the recipient. The Lord Jesus takes them into the ploughfield and the sheepfold and shows them a bondman there. Here is one in subjection. His duty is defined and he has undertaken to perform it. He returns at the time of refreshment but does not look for his own till he has ministered to his lord. He has

done that which was required of him — he has fulfilled his undertaking but his lord is under no obligation to him. “Thus ye also, when ye have done all things that have been ordered you say, We are unprofitable bondmen; we have done what it was our duty to do” (verse 10).

There is a private joy for any who, being occupied to the utmost in the exacting task of ploughing, or the special wisdom needed for shepherding, of knowing that, at the close of the day, he may still have strength remaining to minister to the One Who has made all his labour possible.

To plough at Thy command, or tend Thy sheep!

Is this great honour, undeserved, my own?

To toil till eventide, and ne'er to sleep

Till I have ministered to Thee, alone!

To draw aside, as evening comes again,

To dwell on Thy great love—Thou Saviour God,

In thoughts of that great price—Thy death, Thy pain,

To see the cost of bondmen — in Thy blood.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## ALL THINGS NEW IV

*“And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”*

There is no doubt that the *spiritual* blessings already outlined under this title are the very core of God’s “new things”, but they by no means exhaust them. Great as these blessings are, they do not satisfy the heart of our God. “All things” must be made anew, in accord with His eternal purpose.

## NEW BODIES

Every believer is already spiritually renewed, but as God has made man a tripartite being, He has promised that our poor, lowly bodies shall also be renewed, so as to be conformed to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. iii.21). As we have borne the image of the man of the earth (Adam), and have shared in the ruin of the old creation, and

have joined in its groanings and travailings (Rom. viii.22,23), so shall we who believe bear the image of the heavenly Man—our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. xv.49). This does not mean, by the way, the Lord Jesus as He was here in this world in the days of his flesh. For then He partook of flesh and blood in its weakness, made in all things like unto His brethren (sin apart). No, the “man out of heaven” (JND) in I Cor. xv., Whose image we shall bear, is the Saviour as He is now.

Certainly John described Him as “He that cometh from above”, and “He that cometh from heaven” (John iii.31), but there he was referring to His divine being. In I Cor. xv. Paul was looking forward to His re-appearing at His coming again. He is the Beginning and Head of the New Creation, and has taken humanity — glorified humanity — into heaven with Him. From thence “we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change our vile (i.e. lowly, an earlier meaning of ‘vile’) body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.”

The glorious “resurrection chapter” (I Cor. xv.) makes it plain that the intervention of physical death will not frustrate this blessed hope. “We shall not all sleep,” though at present death spares none, “but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” To this I Thess. iv.17 adds that we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

At that moment — the moment when we see Him — every saint, from Abel onwards, will have a body of glory like the Saviour’s own. None of the scriptures dealing with this subject so much as hints that any believer will be left unchanged. “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is,” says John (I John iii.2).

This likeness to Christ does not mean that we shall lose our individuality. It means likeness, or rather conformity, to Him as the *pattern* of the new manhood. It means that

His new, resurrection life of power and holiness will flow in all who are His. It also means (though this is not our present subject) *moral* conformity to Him.

The analogy that Paul uses to help us understand the resurrection will guide us, if we remember that it is only an analogy. A "bare grain" is sown, and does not reappear. Instead, a green plant comes up (the fact that the new shoot lay ready in the grain is not used in this analogy, and has no part in what Paul is illustrating). Yet each seed produces its own characteristic plant. So, as the green plant is unlike the seed sown, God will give to each sleeping saint a new body "as it hath pleased Him". But also, he says, "to every seed its own body", that is, God will preserve the likeness of each one, and will reproduce it in the new body of glory.

## A NEW CITY — NEW JERUSALEM

It is familiar truth that, for men and women still subject to fleshly limitations, spiritual matters can only be discussed in symbolic terms, and this is emphatically true of the future abode of the redeemed. Though we cannot combine these symbols into one consistent whole, each one makes its contribution to our understanding of the subject.

For Abraham, leaving the idolatrous city of Ur to become a tent-dwelling pilgrim, the eventual goal was not earthly Canaan, which he could not hope to possess in his lifetime, but a heavenly city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". Here the "city" represents *permanence* — lasting blessings which can only be found by committing all to God — in contrast to those fleeting things which are all the world can give. The epistle to the Hebrews calls us to imitate his faith.

Again, in calling on the Hebrew Christians to leave the "camp", i.e. to renounce once and for all the Judaic system which had no place for a crucified Messiah — he adds, "For here we have no abiding city, but we seek one to come". Earthly Jerusalem, and all that she represented, was soon to be judged by God and set aside; but those who had found

salvation in Jesus knew there was nothing lasting in her system of worship, or in the cleansing which it offered the sinner. Paul speaks of her as in bondage with her children. But, he says, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother" (Gal. iv.26), i.e. *there* is the city to which we belong. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii.20). Perhaps the "city" also conveys the idea of belonging to a community — the community of the redeemed.

## NEW JERUSALEM IN REVELATION

The vision of the "holy city, new Jerusalem", which was given to John in Patmos contains many symbols, some of which are difficult to interpret. He sees her twice, first in connection with the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. xxi.2); and again in connection with Israel and the nations, apparently therefore during the Lord's millennial reign (verses 12,24,26 and xxii.2).

He sees her descending out of heaven from God, bright with the glory of God. For God Himself will dwell there. John sees no temple there, for no part is holier than another, but the divine presence pervades it all; access to Him is immediate, and communion and worship are the continual portion of the saints.

The wall of the city, as in Isaiah's vision of the earthly Jerusalem when restored by God's blessing, speaks of salvation (Is. lx.18). "Great and high" it is, for nothing can ever mar the peace or threaten the security of those whom God has justified. Its foundations are adorned with all manner of precious stones, the order of which is said to be the same as the most perfect that man can devise, setting forth therefore the harmony and beauty of the divine attributes which are displayed in God's salvation.

Its size — 12,000 furlongs or 1,500 miles — speaks at least of the vast number of the redeemed. The city, and also its gates and walls, are measured with a golden rod. Now gold, the incorrodable metal, speaks of what is eternal, and thus divine. For all things there are estimated according to

a divine, eternal standard. The city is also *made* of pure gold. Does this also remind us, in its unchanging beauty and value, of the surpassing excellence of those heavenly qualities on which we are called even now to set our minds (Col. iii.1,12-15)? Then it has the transparency of clear glass, symbolizing purity without trace of insincerity or deceit. Only those whose souls have been cleansed by that precious blood, and who will then be renewed into the Saviour's perfect likeness, could dwell in such a city!

No created light, however magnificent, illuminates the city, for God Himself is there. There is no question of day or night, of sun or moon, for this city does not belong to the old creation. Moreover darkness, in which evil men seek to hide, is unknown. Instead, the city gives light to the nations, meaning perhaps that men on earth in that day will gain understanding of God's will and ways through what He has done for the church.

The city has twelve gates, bearing the names of Israel's twelve tribes, and an angel guarding (?) each, but the gates are always open. The angels are not *in* the city, for this is the bride, the Lamb's wife, and its citizens are redeemed men. The open gates betoken perfect liberty for those written in the Lamb's book of life, but nothing defiling can enter. Gates in scripture also speak of government, as does the number twelve when used symbolically, so that in this we see the truth that the (heavenly) saints will judge (or govern) the world, in connection with God's earthly people Israel (I Cor. vi.2; Matt. xix.28). Just how this will be is not clear, but God's word is definite as to the fact.

Then John sees the throne of God and the Lamb, and sees it as the source of the pure river of the water of life. Here is the secret of all blessing — that the redemptive work of Christ has made the righteousness of God's throne the very source of the believing sinner's salvation. The water of life — eternal life in the power of the Spirit — first received as an individual gift from God (John iv.), flows in abundance for all in the heavenly city, through the midst of its street.

Then there is the tree of life — symbol of Christ Himself

— growing on both sides of the river. Its fruit, borne continually, tells of the unfailing refreshment of soul for those privileged to enjoy His companionship. Its leaves, “for the healing of the nations”, portray the continuance throughout the millennium of Christ’s healing ministry on earth, a ministry in which we may be sure His heavenly saints will share. The curse is for ever removed.

John’s vision of the holy city brings us back to the throne: “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve (worship) Him: and they shall see His face: and His name shall be in their foreheads.” This is important, for however great our privileges and blessings, He is the Creator and we but creatures — bondservants. Indeed, there is no higher privilege than that we should see His face, in perfect acceptance (contrast 2 Sam. xiv.28) — God revealed in the Lamb — and worship Him. And our foreheads — the most prominent place — will bear His name for all to read. This has a double message: we belong to Him, and we shall be perfectly like Him. O that our demeanour should convey this message *now*!

Such is this wonderful city. But it is not just our eternal dwelling place, for we shall be part of it. This glory, this beauty, this purity — is what God has made, and is making, His saints to *be* — the perfection which is ours in Christ, “when He shall come to be glorified in His saints” (2 Thess. i.10).

“And there shall be no night there.” How often, after a day enriched by fellowship, ministry and service in the things of the Lord, we have yet been glad of the coming of night! For our little measure is so soon filled! But *then*, all the radiant glory will not exhaust us, and no night will bring it to an end. And there will be but one source of light, for it will come direct from God Himself, not through any created channel.

“And they shall reign for ever and ever.” Bondservants, and yet reigning! Not just for a thousand years (chap. xx.4), but for ever. We might perhaps translate “the splendour of kings shall be theirs for ever.”

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

Finally, the word "provide" calls for attention. It implies a carefully thought out line of action, particularly necessary because our actions are so easily misunderstood by the world.

For instance, even though we believe that our meeting room is just a place for assembling, and is not a sacred building, we should do well to ensure that it is never untidy or dilapidated, inside or out. It is not that we should be under bondage to men's thoughts, and some misunderstanding is no doubt inevitable, but we should not be high handed. The principle of love for our neighbours would lead us to consider their point of view, even if this needs correction.

We can understand naturally Paul goes on to write, "As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Undue combativeness, or extravagant language, even in defence of a godly principle, may lead us astray, and cause friction which is quite needless. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

E.H.C.

## CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

The power of the Cross of Christ in the life of the believer.

(Galatians ii.19,20; v.24; vi.14)

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians has been called the Crucifixion Epistle because of these three passages that speak, not only of the Cross of Christ, but also of the believer being crucified with Christ. The stupendous truth contained in the Apostle Paul's words "I am crucified with Christ" is valid for every believer. This vital truth governed and controlled the Apostle's whole life, but it is only as we appropriate it individually by faith that we can know the power of it in our own lives.

In Galatians i.4 we read: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for *our sins*"—for the product, or fruit, of our corrupt, fallen nature. Galatians ii.20 takes us a step further: "Who gave Himself for *me*"—for the sinner who produced those sins, the sin-factory itself. This verse deals with the root from which our sins spring, the depravity and evil of our very nature. It opens up the way of deliverance from the power of sin, for we learn the very important truth that on the cross, not only was Christ crucified *for* us, but that there we are crucified *with* Him.

In these three passages we have the three-fold deliverance available for the believer through the Cross of Christ.

### DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW

Firstly, in Galatians ii.19-20 we see that the Cross of Christ delivers from the principle of law-keeping. The law given to Moses on Mount Sinai for the nation of Israel condemned them because they disobeyed its commands. However well intentioned they were, they found by bitter experience that they were powerless to keep it. Consequently they were unable to find acceptance with God on the principle of law-keeping, but came under the curse of the broken law (Gal. iii.10). The law of God condemns all who try to find acceptance with God by keeping it, because we all fall short of its requirements. But from these verses we learn that

the believer is dead to the law. Paul says "I am crucified with Christ". When a man was crucified he remained on the cross until he died. Now, it is clear that a dead man cannot keep the law; he cannot fear its penalty of death: he has suffered it already. God counts it that the believer is crucified with Christ, that we died with Him. That is our judicial standing before God and, consequently, we are completely free from the principle of law-keeping. But there is more. The Apostle continues: "Nevertheless I live". This is a new life altogether. It is Christ Himself living in us.

Now, how does this work out in practice? First, we must appropriate the truth by faith. Then, we are to act upon it by yielding ourselves more and more to Christ by the exercise of faith in Him, so that His life is lived out in us.

Let us notice that it is precisely at this point in verse 20 that the Spirit of God brings before us the constraining power of the love of Christ. "Who gave Himself for me", the Apostle writes. The remembrance of that great love, the Holy Son of God giving Himself for us, worthless and defiled by sin as we were, constrains us to do the things that please Him. The constraint of the love of Christ is a much more powerful motive than the penalties and sanctions of the law. We have a different and a very much higher motive for doing what is right. We want to please our Saviour Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Where the law threatens and compels, the love of Christ constrains. In addition, Christ living in us provides the power—the power of His resurrection life—to enable us to do the things that please Him.

So, we have Christ our life—its source, its constant flow and object—the love of Christ to constrain us and the power of Christ to enable us. It may be asked, if we are so well equipped, why then do Christians sometimes sin and do what is wrong? It is because we forget that though Christ lives within, we must exercise constant faith in Him at all times. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. ii.6); that is, by faith.

## **DELIVERANCE FROM THE FLESH**

Secondly, in Galatians v.24 we learn that the Cross delivers

from the passions of the flesh. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." It is a positive statement of a truth that applies to all that are Christ's, to every believer in Him. The flesh in this verse is that corrupt, evil nature with all its sinful propensities which we inherit from Adam. It can neither be tamed nor improved. It is incurable and remains a corrupt thing. But if you belong to Christ, if you are one of His, God counts it that the flesh with all its appetites, its unholy desires and lusts has been crucified with Christ, bound hands and feet, and nailed to His cross.

Again, it may be asked, How does this work out in practice when I know that the flesh is still within me? We have to reckon as God reckons. It is a matter of faith, the constant exercise of faith. If we feel the stirrings of the flesh within us, what are we to do? We must remember the Cross of Christ, that He not only died for our sins, but that our flesh was crucified there also. Then it is finished, dead and buried in God's reckoning. How then can we yield to its desires any longer? As believers, we are finished with the life of the flesh: it came to its end in death in the Cross of Christ and we must treat with it on this basis whenever it seeks to manifest itself. Our Saviour died for us, not only that we might have the joy of His forgiveness, but also that we might continually by faith count that our flesh was put to death at His cross.

### **DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD**

Thirdly, the Cross of Christ delivers from the world (Gal. vi. 14). The world flaunts its favours in the eyes of men, it holds out its glittering but tainted prizes, but it hides its true character under a veneer and cloak of respectability. We need to be very much on our guard, for the world is a wolf in sheep's clothing. The Word of God reveals its real character. It is an evil world with Satan himself its prince and god. He it is who pulls the strings, who guides and governs its politics, its principles, its passions, its pride and vainglory. When the Son of God came to earth, "the world knew Him not" (John i.10). The world cast Him out and crucified Him; the hands of the world are stained with His precious blood. We who are His are cast out with Him; we are called to share the shame

of His rejection. The early Christians were reviled, beaten, imprisoned, treated as the refuse and offscouring of this world, and they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts v.41).

There are three crucifixions in Galatians vi.14. Firstly, Paul glories in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sees the blessed Person of his Lord and Saviour nailed to the cross, giving Himself for him. As he contemplates the amazing love of that great sacrifice, he sees the Lord Jesus coming between him and the world. He has no eyes for the world now in the light of that Cross: he sees Jesus only. His gaze is focused upon his Lord and Saviour there.

Then, the Apostle sees a second cross. He sees the world, which rejected and crucified the Son of God, nailed to a cross. The world could no longer hold out its hands to beckon him, as it had done before, for the hands of the world were nailed to a cross.

Lastly, Paul sees himself upon the cross. "The world is crucified unto me, and *I unto the world*", he writes. His feet could no longer run in the ways of the world; his hands could no longer grasp the tainted vanities of the world; he is bound and nailed, hands and feet, to his Saviour's cross.

Isaac Watts understood the truth of this when he wrote his solemn, but beautiful hymn:

"When I survey the wondrous cross".

It is now one of the four best loved hymns in the English language. When he wrote it two hundred and sixty years ago, he entitled it:

"Crucifixion to the world by the Cross of Christ".

There is a fifth verse, not usually sung, the first two lines of which speak of our Saviour's outpoured precious blood. Then, as a consequence, he wrote:

"Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me".

"Globe" here of course is a synonym for the world system—it does not mean the beautiful earth which God created. So, when the world holds out its hands to us, proffering its tempt-

ing, but tainted prizes, we must say, No!—"I am crucified with Christ".

A. E. JORDAN

## ALL THINGS NEW. V

### God's Ultimate Purpose (Revelation xxi. 1-8)

In previous articles we have glanced briefly at God's purposes of *spiritual* renewal, which are already taking shape. Now let us conclude by considering His promise to renew the heavens and the earth themselves—what we might call the framework of the New Creation.

Many scriptures declare that the present earth and heavens are to come to an end. The Lord Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Matt. xxiv.35). In Hebrews xii.27 we learn that all things capable of being shaken will be removed, in order that the unshakable things may remain. Paul declares that visible things are temporal—only the unseen things are eternal (2 Cor. iv.18). John sees heaven and earth "flee away" from the face of the Lord as He sits on the great white throne of judgment (Rev. xx.11). Lastly, Peter tells us "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" (2 Pet. iii.10).

Peter goes on to point out that God had promised to create new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness would dwell (Isaiah lxv.17), and in Rev. xxi.1 John has a vision of this. It will be seen, however, that the New Testament prophet goes beyond the Old, for Isaiah's words go on to mention earthly Jerusalem, though that too must disappear when the earth itself is destroyed. But John describes them as "new" in that second sense of a *new kind*, though apart from this hint, only one detail is given us—there was no more sea.

Is this just a literal fact, or is it symbolic? Does it, for example, imply that the continual change which characterizes the present earth will be no more? For the sea is always in

motion, and our weather is largely dependent on it. Certainly the absence of sea is in keeping with the changelessness of the eternal scene. Some have stressed the absence of separation between the various parts, though in eternal conditions the sea might be no longer an obstacle. As no other details are mentioned, the symbolic meaning is more probably the true one.

John sees the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. In verse 9 she is described as "the bride, the Lamb's wife", and John sees her in verse 2 as still in the beauty of her bridal array, though the "marriage of the Lamb" (chapter xix.) had taken place long before. A thousand years has not dimmed the brightness of that day, nor made its joys to pall.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them—their God."

It is no longer the nations bringing their glory and honour to it (verse 26), for that statement belongs to the Lord's millennial reign, as we noticed last month. Now the earth has been destroyed, and "nations" are no more. The present distinctions between men have disappeared, and only the redeemed will be there. This raises a question to which scripture gives no actual answer—how will the godly inhabitants of the earth be preserved during the destruction of the earth? The judgment of the ungodly is described in xx.9, from which judgment the godly are obviously delivered. The answer does not concern us directly, but we must necessarily assume that their bodies will be changed to fit them for eternity, as the bodies of those living when the Lord Jesus returns will be changed (1 Cor. xv.51). And if the saints caught up to be with the Lord when He comes (1 Thess. iv.17) form part of the heavenly Jerusalem, the godly of the millennial earth will probably be found on the renewed earth.

Now it is said, "The tabernacle of God is with *men*." God's eternal purpose to have His dwelling with men will at last have been brought to pass. The bride of the Lamb, the Church, still has her special place, but in God's eternity the special



blessing of one takes nothing away from any other! And all is of sovereign grace.

Are we to understand that the heavenly city comes down to earth? The sharp distinction which we now think of between heaven and earth will have no such validity when everything is as God would have it, so that it may well be we are meant to understand the New Jerusalem on the earth, the centre from which the glory of divine love is shed on all around. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them—their God". It is what God Himself has sought after, what man was created for—to have communion with his Maker, now also his Redeemer. "God with us"—that is, Emmanuel. For it is always in the Son that God is made known, and this will be as true then as it is now. His title "the Lamb" is not used in these verses, because His work as the Mediator will have been finished, but His manhood is of course eternal.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

We are reminded of the gracious words of Isaiah lxvi.13 "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." The sorrows of earth do not just fade away, but He Himself is the comforter, bestowing more than mere solace. This He does even now. But then the brightness of His love will banish every shadow, the glory and light of His presence dispel every perplexity. No more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, and no more pain—the former things will have passed away. These things are all traceable to sin, and sin will have been banished for ever. Surely these words of comfort are written so that at this present time we may be certain that none of these things are according to His will. We must trust where we cannot understand.

There follows the declaration on which our study is based: "Behold, I make all things new." Its certainty is underlined by the command, "Write: for these words are true and faithful." Then, just as in the Old Testament particularly solemn statements are followed by the words, "I am the Lord", so here we

get "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." It is a kind of oath; and who but the Creator could speak of things such as these? From Him Who knows the end from the beginning, these words have meaning, and His word is sufficient assurance that they will indeed come to pass. Then He says, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

Is it strange to find these last words in such a setting? No, indeed, for this is what it is all about! These things are not told us to satisfy curiosity, but to lead the heart away from the things of earth to find our rest and satisfaction in Himself—the water of life is His own gift, as the Lord told the woman of Samaria. The new heaven and earth is the sphere where the eternal life He gives finds its full fruition.

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Overcoming is by faith (I John v.4)—faith that cleaves to Christ whatever the opposition or the allurements of the world. It is no matter of merit. The solemn warning in verse 8 to those who choose to follow the way of the world instead of Christ gains all the more force from its place here—in opposition to those eternal things just described. Nothing that defiles can find a place in the Eternal City, and the unsullied purity of the New Creation has its counterpart in the final judgment of those who refuse repentance.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## "GO YE"

In Timothy iii.16 we have the briefest biography of the greatest Person Who ever lived upon this earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of its introduction just here in this chapter would seem to be to emphasize the exhortation in the previous verse, which is that we may know how we should behave ourselves in the House of God, which is the Assembly of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. If the grace of God has wrought in our hearts to give us such an honoured position in the unfolding of His counsels

in this present age, what a responsibility rests upon us to walk consistently with it!

As our ideal to look up to and the power to fulfil it in ourselves who else is there but Himself, the One Who was God, manifest in flesh? Great indeed is the mystery of the piety He displayed throughout His earthly pathway. The record is preserved for our reverent study in the four Gospels which expand these brief phrases, "God was manifested in flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

### **A FOUR-FOLD PRESENTATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

The four Gospels are not repetitions, nor fragmentary, nor are they conflicting in any way. Each has its special theme in the portraiture of the Lord Jesus Christ. This did not result from any deliberate plan of their human authors, nor from their collusion while sitting round a conference table. The Gospels are the fulfilment of a divine plan, which we can trace in the Old Testament prophecies of His coming.

In the prophets there occurs four times (five if we count Jeremiah's repetition) a Hebrew word which gives the themes with divine precision for these four New Testament records. It is the title "the Branch", more literally a sprout as from a tree.

(i) "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper." Jeremiah xxiii.5, and also xxxiii.15.

Matthew's Gospel presents Christ to Israel as their King, and contains His teaching as to righteousness.

(ii) "For behold, I will bring forth My Servant, the Branch". Zechariah iii.8.

Mark presents this servant character of our Lord's life and ministry.

(iii) "Behold the Man Whose name is the Branch, and He shall grow up out of His place." Zechariah vi.12.

So Luke presents the perfect manhood of the One born at Bethlehem Who grew up at Nazareth.

(iv) "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious." Isaiah iv.2.

So in John's Gospel our hearts thrill to behold the beauty and glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It has often been observed that the openings of the four Gospels confirm these themes. Matthew is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David". Mark has no genealogy—we should not expect this of a servant. Luke traces His descent "being as was supposed, the son of Joseph" right back to Adam, the first man. John writes of the Word Who was in the beginning with God and Who was God, and Who became flesh and dwelt among us.

These four records of the life of the Lord Jesus are always put in the forefront of the New Testament. Does not this stress that beyond all else we should know intimately the Person if we are to know how to conduct ourselves in the Assembly of God? And as He is now absent from us, His last words must have a memorable place in our hearts, giving us His final instructions. Let us therefore consider the closing verses of the four Gospels.

### MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew's Gospel is unique in the prominence given to the so-called "great commission", spoken on a mountain top in Galilee. So important was this last message that four times the disciples are instructed about it beforehand. Firstly by the Lord Himself, on the mount of Olives before the Cross, "After I am risen I will go before you into Galilee" (Matt. xxvi.32). Secondly, by the angel who met the two Marys returning from the sepulchre, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him" (xxviii.7). Then as they went Jesus Himself met them with the reminder "Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me" (verse 10). Finally "the eleven

disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (verse 16). Even so, such is the human heart that, "when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted."

Now what is this momentous last message which made the long journey from Jerusalem to Galilee necessary, and was so carefully planned? "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Had it not always been so? This is God's answer to the Cross, anticipating a Man in the glory of God, seated at His right hand, with royal authority to direct His disciples upon earth. Yet His ascension is not recorded in this Gospel, no doubt for a special reason. What human author would have omitted such an event?

"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." During Christ's earthly ministry, they were expressly forbidden to go to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles, but were sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (x.5,6). The Cross has changed this: all nations must hear of Him and so "Galilee of the nations" (iv.15) is the chosen venue. In this extensive new sphere His disciples would tell of their Master, of His teaching and of the responsibilities of discipleship. Is not this what we should be doing?

For new disciples there must be the initial step of submitting to baptism in water, no longer John's nor that of Jesus (see John iii.26; iv.1,2) but "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The revelation of the three Persons in the Godhead had already been foreshadowed at Jesus' baptism by John, when the Father's voice was heard from the opened heaven and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and abode upon the Son. This is the Name to be confessed, and it is no difficulty to read in the early chapters of the Acts that these very disciples baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus, as indeed they preached and healed and did all else in His Name.

There follows the command to teach new disciples to observe all things which the apostles themselves had received from their Master. All traditions and superstitions must go. This Gospel gives great prominence to His teaching, and we must

not minimize its importance, in dwelling upon the higher and deeper truths revealed later on in the Epistles.

There are five major sections on His teaching in Matthew, each concluding with similar words, such as "When Jesus had ended these sayings," thus marking them out for us. They are found at vii.28, xi.1, xiii.53, xix.1, xxvi.1. Thus chapters 5 to 7 contain the principles of the kingdom of heaven, not contradicting Moses but going beyond the law of Sinai. Chapter 10 has instructions for His disciples when He sent them out to preach. Chapter 13 gives in seven parables grouped together the prophetic history of the kingdom of heaven down the centuries. Chapter 18 teaches humility and the relation of the disciples to one another and of gathering to Christ's Name. Chapters 24 and 25 are prophetic of the whole period till Christ's return, first the immediate and distant future of the guilty nation, then in three parables the course of Christian profession, and finally the future judgment of the nations when He comes in His glory.

Lastly, "Lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the age." It is as though the Lord's work of making disciples is to continue, extending to all nations; and may well include the future re-gathering of the godly remnant of Israel. What a gracious provision thus to be assured of the Lord's presence with us, when the enemy is determined to hinder if he cannot halt the Lord's work! Is the absence of reference to the Lord's ascension and of the promise of the Holy Spirit intended to cast us the more upon the Lord's spiritual presence with us?

H. HARLE

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## **"PROVIDE THINGS HONEST IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN"**

*(Romans xii.17.)*

These words contain a very important principle. We meet this again in 2 Corinthians viii.21, with the addition "not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

“Honest” is nowadays a word of rather restricted scope, but here it means **whatever is seen or felt to be good and right**. The Greek word originally meant “beautiful.” Next, “in the sight of” does not mean just what can be seen, for this is meaningless when applied to the Lord, Who sees everything. No, “in the sight of men” means according to their judgment, just as “in the sight of the Lord” means according to His judgment.

Paul, in 2 Cor. viii, explains how, in making arrangements for the collection of the bounty of the Gentile churches and its conveyance to Jerusalem for distribution, he was careful that well known and approved men were joined with him, so that all the saints should be satisfied. It was not enough that the Lord should know that all was well.

In Romans xii the words are “in the sight of *all* men”. It is not confined to believers. We must consider the world also, and seek to satisfy the moral sense of our neighbours. The example of the Lord Jesus is our guide here. When the the collectors of the Temple tax asked Peter if his master paid the tax, Jesus first showed Peter how inapplicable the tax was to Him, the Lord of the Temple, and then added, “Notwithstanding, lest we should stumble them”—and sent Peter to pay the shekel, miraculously provided. To do what the tax collectors felt to be right was His principle of action, though this involved giving up His own rights.

The context in which this command occurs is that of persecution. Whatever the provocation, Paul exhorts them not to return evil for evil. The Christian, he says, must always be seen to be doing what is right and good, never what is evil. Peter, in his first epistle, writes to much the same effect: “Having your conversation honest (same Greek word) among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. ii.12). However, while the command is specially important (and specially difficult) in days of persecution, it is very necessary at all times.

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## **A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

according to the flesh, "not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God", they were in truth "serving the Lord Christ"! They had no option about yielding their bodies to serve their masters, but in the *manner* of their service they could still make it an acceptable service to the Lord Jesus.

The apostle, then, entreats us to give up our bodies—and it must be done each day afresh—as a sacrifice to God. Our hands to work for him, our lips to speak for Him, our feet to carry us where He wants us to go. And not least, our faces to reflect the peace and joy that belong to those who have Christ as their Saviour and Keeper, though this of course, cannot be the result of effort, but only through obeying the scriptural precept "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Have we not cause enough to rejoice?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS XLVI. PATIENT WAITING

(Read: Psalm xxxvii.7)

It is always good for the believer to reflect upon the excellencies of the Lord Jesus, and to see perfectly displayed in Him those virtues for which he himself yearns.

We learn from the Gospel of Luke (Ch. iii.23) that our Lord did not begin His public ministry until He was about thirty years of age. During the period of His childhood and early manhood He must, because of His sinless nature, have been acutely sensitive to the sin and misery around Him. Day by day He heard the groanings of Satan's captives, and beheld the sorrow and suffering which sin entailed for the fallen race amongst whom He lived. How could one with His deep compassion remain silent and withhold His healing powers for so many years?

The answer surely is to be found in His perfect submission to the will of His Father, Whose ordering governed every moment and movement of His life on earth. What patience this called for! We see it in evidence too, when, after being told of the sickness of Lazarus, the Lord abode two days still in the same place where He was (John xi.6). There was no panic or rushing here and there where He was concerned—only a calm waiting for the word of His Father to move forward.

When risen from the dead, His sufferings over, the same patient waiting upon His Father's good pleasure was required, and this continues now that He is ascended. Hebrews x.13 reminds us of the prophetic word in Psalm cx. that the Lord Jesus is now at the right hand of God, *waiting* until His enemies become His footstool. Before He ascended to heaven His disciples showed *their* impatience when they enquired whether He would *at that time* restore the kingdom to Israel. To this the Lord replied that times and seasons were retained by the Father in His own power. They must therefore share His own patience, and in the meantime be loyal witnesses for Him unto the ends of the earth.

In the book of Genesis there are two significant examples of patient waiting, in which the patience of the Lord Jesus is typified.

Chapter xxiv. records the beautiful account of the departure of Abraham's servant to the land of his fathers to find a bride for Isaac. Confident though they both were that the mission would be successful, it was impossible to forecast how long it would take. One can imagine the keen expectancy with which Isaac was obliged to possess his soul in patience. Did he form his own idea of how long the servant would be away, and count the months, weeks and days until his return? We do not know of course, but we are told of an evening when he went out into the fields to meditate, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had done the same thing on many past occasions in his yearning for the earliest possible glimpse of the one who was to become his wife.

In the record as given, Isaac's part was entirely passive. All the work was done by Abraham's faithful servant Eliezer (unnamed in the chapter) who doubtless typifies the Holy Spirit. Isaac had only to wait for the arrival of the one upon whom he would bestow his love according to the purpose of his father and the selection of the servant.

This presents us with a contrast when we consider the One of whom Isaac was a type. The Lord Jesus had to leave heaven and come to this earth, there to give His life for the church upon whom He had set His affections. His present care, in which the Holy Spirit acts for Him here, is that He might sanctify her and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Ephesians v.25-27).

Nevertheless that bride of His is not yet complete. Those members who have already been gathered home remain in His safe keeping until the day when He will bring them with Him to collect the whole company of the redeemed on earth to be with Him. In the meantime, despite the provocation of things said and done in the world which dishonour Him, and the persecution of so many of His people whose

sufferings we may be sure He feels as He felt His own, He waits on; for it is the day of His patience (see Revelation i.9).

A further aspect of His patience is conveyed in the subsequent example of Joseph, whose restraint and patience in the matter of his brothers is so remarkable.

How often during his servitude and imprisonment in Egypt must Joseph have longed to go back home to see those he knew, if only to talk with someone who spoke his native tongue! But there was no parole from the dungeon in Egypt. The released prisoner who might have made an effort to secure Joseph's freedom, forgot him. We are told a number of times that the Lord was with Joseph, but apart from this he had to endure his sad and lonely existence until, as Psalm cv.19 tells us, "his word came", and the king loosed him and let him go free.

What should Joseph do then? Return home? No, he set about the task God had assigned to him, to garner the harvests of seven years of plenty in Egypt in preparation for the dearth to come thereafter. No doubt the task was a tremendous one, but once the plan of working was established, was it it not a question of waiting from one harvest to the next? Were there no intervals when Joseph could have been spared for a visit to his home? Geographically Egypt was not so far away from Canaan, and it seems a little surprising that Joseph apparently made no attempt to contact his kindred or to let his father know he was still alive.

Doubtless in this he acted wisely, under the direction of God, for when Joseph's plan for the recovery of his brothers bore the wholesome fruit of repentance, the way for true reconciliation became open. Until then, however, what patience Joseph displayed!

The Lord Jesus waits for the recovery of God's ancient people Israel, for not one of the divine promises to their fathers can be allowed to remain unfulfilled. Yet this must await the full working out of God's discipline upon the nation that crucified their Messiah, and the sincere repentance and bitter mourning of which Zechariah speaks in chapters xii. and xiii. of his prophecy. Not till then can their glorious destiny be achieved.

In the meantime, He Who is to occupy the throne of David waits patiently for the hour of His Father's choosing. We may be sure His heart yearns for the blessing of Israel as we know it does for the completion of His bride.

May we in our own measure reflect the Lord's patience in the day to day concerns of our lives, as well as in our waiting for the coming of the Lord, meanwhile remaining steadfast and immovable in our faith and loyalty to Him.

E. A. PETTMAN

## **JEROBOAM 1st**

In Hebrews iii.12 we read a solemn warning. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Such an evil heart was Jeroboam's, the first monarch of the divided kingdom of Israel, one who came short of the promises of God through unbelief.

Let us examine the background of Jeroboam's rise from obscurity to the throne of Israel. First we are confronted with

### **SOLOMON'S UNGODLY WAYS**

King Solomon, who had begun his reign in such a promising manner, was led astray by his many foreign wives. I wonder if he obeyed the law of Moses when he became king, and copied out the principles of kingship as set out in Deuteronomy xvii.14-20? It is remarkable that with all his God-given wisdom, he yet departed from all these principles, by multiplying horses, wives and riches. These very things seem to have turned his heart away from God, so that we read the solemn words of 1 Kings xi.6: "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord." What a warning for those that start well, but in their old age depart from the truth, and often lead many younger believers astray!

There was really no excuse for Solomon, for, as we read in verse 9: "The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him

concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded." Hence God declared that He would rend part of the kingdom from Solomon, and give it to his servant—yet for David's sake He would not do this in Solomon's own lifetime.

To fulfil this, God stirred up adversaries against him, among whom was Jeroboam, a brave and diligent servant, whom Solomon had put in a responsible position. The prophet Ahijah was entrusted with a message for this young man. Tearing his new garment into twelve pieces, he gave ten pieces to Jeroboam, as a token that he was to rule over ten tribes, though for David's sake the other two tribes should remain under Rehoboam's rule.

### GOD'S UNCHANGING WORD

God had promised the kingdom to David, as we read in Psalm cxxxii.11: "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, He will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." As Balaam said, "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" But now Solomon was confronted with another promise of God, made to Jeroboam, that part of the kingdom should be Jeroboam's. Instead of resting in the assurance of God, "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake," Solomon, like Herod later, took the law into his own hands, and sought to kill Jeroboam; but of course, God's promises could not be frustrated, and Jeroboam fled into Egypt until Solomon's death.

God's promise to Jeroboam was plain, the kingdom was to be his unconditionally. "Thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel." The perpetuation of the kingdom, on the other hand, was conditional on his obedience. "If thou wilt hearken . . . walk in My ways, and do that is right in My sight . . . I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house." The kingdom was his. He had only to believe the promise of God for this. Yet, like Jacob, he felt that he needed to work out his own schemes to obtain the fulfilment of the promise. Can we not, perhaps, see a picture of ourselves in this? So often we are not content with God's clear promise, but try by our own

efforts to obtain our object, often at the cost of our obedience to God's word.

When the time came for Jeroboam to ascend the throne, God was already working. At the same time that he heard of King Solomon's death, messengers from restive Israelites reached him, begging him to return, so that, when Rehoboam foolishly took the advice of his young men, and spoke roughly to Jeroboam and the people's representatives, they immediately turned to Jeroboam, and made him king over the northern tribes. Rehoboam set out with the intention of subduing the rebellious kingdom by military force, but Shemaiah, the man of God, having pointed out that God's hand was in this matter, Rehoboam wisely refrained from fighting against God.

### **JEROBOAM'S SURPASSING WICKEDNESS**

It would have been well for Jeroboam if he, too, had listened to God's messengers. God could have blessed him and his descendents (one of whom seems to have shown great promise), and he would never have earned that terrible title of "the man that made Israel to sin." But the promises of God were not enough for this man. He reasoned on a human level. "Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, . . . they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam" (I Kings xii.26). The kingdom of Judah was privileged to have the Temple of God in its midst. The northern kingdom had not this favour. What should Jeroboam have done? It is easy to judge him, but let us remember that even David, the anointed of God, was once in such a low spiritual condition that he said: "I shall now perish one day at the hand of Saul," and went down to join the Philistines, his people's enemies, and barely escaped from the shameful position of fighting with them against Saul's army.

There is no doubt that if Jeroboam had truly sought the mind of God about his problem, he would have been reassured that, whatever happened, the kingdom was his. If he had set an example to his people by going regularly to



Jerusalem to worship, the two kingdoms could, perhaps, have lived together in peace and godliness for many years. There were prophets in the northern kingdom, as we see in the next chapter, but it appears as though the ungodly example of the king caused even the faithful to shrink from a public avowal of their trust in the living God.

Instead of asking God, however, we read that Jeroboam “took counsel”, evidently of men, and as a result of this set up the two golden calves. One was at Dan, in the far north, and the other, as a challenge to the God of Jacob, at Beth-el, of which Jacob had declared centuries before: “This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” It is remarkable that he repeated the sin of Aaron and the people of Israel at the foot of Sinai, when God had already pronounced the solemn words: “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” He even used Aaron’s ill-advised words: “Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.”

Had Jeroboam already forgotten the words of Ahijah, when the kingdom was promised him? For it was taken away from Solomon’s son because of the encouragement of idolatry, and now Jeroboam was committing the same sin. It has been argued that Jeroboam was in reality worshipping Jehovah, but with the aid of visible images. This is urged by many today to excuse blatant idolatry. The Scripture does not support this. It says plainly: “This thing became a sin.” No image is required to enable man to worship God, for every image must misrepresent Him. In fact the very idea is condemned throughout Scripture.

God had said: “Ye shall worship in the place that I shall choose.” Dan and Beth-el were Jeroboam’s own choice. Today many seek to serve and worship God in the way and in the place that suits them, but the New Testament teaches us that the place must be of God’s choosing, which is any “place” where true believers are gathered in no other name but that of Christ, so that He is in the midst, and where the Holy Spirit is free to use whom He will to lead in true worship.

Then again, God had chosen Aaron and his sons to serve Him as priests. Jeroboam had no access to God's priests, so he made "priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." Christendom has its counterpart in this, in setting up a special order of priests, often including unconverted men, and setting aside God's principle of the priesthood of all believers.

Not content with these alterations, Jeroboam even found fault with the feasts of Jehovah, and made his own feast a month later than the divinely ordained Feast of Tabernacles, as the divine record says, "the month that he had devised of his own heart." We may see a parallel to this in the "saints' days" and church festivals recognized in Christendom, while the regular coming together for prayer, edification and the remembrance of the Lord is often sadly missed out.

We know the result of Jeroboam's sad beginning. Of the nineteen kings that sat on the throne of the northern kingdom it does not seem that one sought after God. Many were murdered by usurpers, who, in turn, were overthrown by others. Meanwhile other idolatries were added to Jeroboam's, until finally "the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight" (2 Kings xvii.18), delivering them into the hands of the Assyrians.

These things were written for our learning. Our God and Father seeks worshippers, but those that worship in spirit and in truth. May it be true of us, as Paul writes to the Philippians: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians iii.3).

A. RETALICK

**"GO YE"**

*(continued)*

### MARK'S GOSPEL

Let us now look more briefly at the Lord's last words as given by the other evangelists.

The special meeting in Galilee is noted in Mark xvi.7, where the angel's words are "Go your way and tell His

disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee." What a delicate rebuke to a failing servant who had denied his Master! Though Mark recalls briefly the various appearances of the risen Lord, it would appear that verses 15 to 18 refer to the meeting in Galilee, in different words chosen by the Holy Spirit to add instruction as to the content of the gospel message: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This recalls Mark's opening words "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". The Gospel centres in the Person.

To this "beginning" the Epistles add "the gospel of the grace of God", and "the gospel of the glory of Christ". But Mark has the foundation for personal blessing, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." So it is believing that separates the saved from the lost, not baptism as many are taught today.

In those early days signs followed, for their encouragement, not gratification, and as a challenge to the unbeliever, authenticating the message before the scriptures were written. Today some mistakenly claim the continuance of certain only of these signs, namely tongues and healing, apparently to exalt their own particular section of Christendom at the expense of others.

Mark records the Ascension from Bethany. "He was *received up* into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." The Servant's work here was done, He was received up and sat down, having handed over the preaching to His disciples. Accordingly, "they preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." Again no reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit. How we need all scriptures. As we today preach the word, rest assured the Lord will be working with us.

It is good to hear of younger brothers and sisters in Christ going abroad and having proof of this promise. We can rejoice in the work of the Bible Societies, of translators, of radio broadcasts. But what are we personally doing in response to the Lord's parting words? To give of our means

is good, and scriptural; we can also pray. But the Lord's command is "Go ye", we must speak of Him to those we meet. It is sad when the gospel meeting is the first to be discontinued. Yet "Go ye" has the same authority as "This do". The Acts records the proper balance between the two ministries that Paul distinguishes in Col. i.23,25, that of the Gospel and that of the Assembly.

We can be thankful for the zeal of many young people in our schools and colleges, and for any measure of the revival of evangelical preaching. But we need wisdom to discriminate between those through whom the Lord is working, and those who make a hero of a Man they call Jesus, while by omission they deny Him His full title as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of sinners. We must distinguish also between social benefits and spiritual blessing.

### LUKE'S GOSPEL

Luke's account of the risen Lord shows Him still a perfect Man, walking along with two disconsolate disciples, then going in to eat a meal with them at Emmaus. Again He meets the eleven at Jerusalem and eats with them, and on both occasions He opens their understanding of the scriptures. In place of the Galilee interview, we have a development of the content of the Gospel, and the ground on which it is based. "Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations." (xxiv.46,47). But the guilty city of Jerusalem should be the first to hear from these disciples, who were His witnesses. A witness can only speak of what he has seen and heard; it is a personal testimony still that has weight.

Now here we do find the promise of the Father to endue them with power from on high, and here too the Lord, as Man, is *carried up* into heaven, His hands uplifted in blessing before their eyes. No wonder they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy—joy deeper than that of the shepherds at His birth—and continued in the temple,

praising and blessing God. Although the temple has gone, the Holy Spirit remains as the power for witness, and for worship in the Assembly.

## JOHN'S GOSPEL

Lastly we have John's Gospel, so much loved by us all, and here we have the fullest account of the risen Lord's activities, especially His tender dealings with Peter. The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit had already occupied a prominent place in those last hours of conversation with His disciples before the Cross, recorded in chapters 14 to 16. There is no record of His ascension, and the reason is clear. As Son of God He had spoken earlier of ascending up where He was before. On the resurrection morn Mary was entrusted with the message "Go to My brethren and say unto them, 'I *ascend* unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God'." Not "received up" as in Mark, or "carried up" as in Luke. As Son of God He *ascends up* "far above all heavens that He might fill all things" (Eph. iv.10).

As to the content of the Gospel, John adds to what the synoptists have told us. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (xx.30,31). Eternal life, God's gift to whoever believes in the Son of Man lifted up on the Cross—what a message for today, for all nations!

The more we study these four Gospels, with their richness and beauty, with their variety of themes, and the vastness of the salvation offered through the life, death and resurrection of such a Saviour, the more we shall feel like John in his last verse—"There are many other things that Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Do you ever feel like that? May these meditations help us, and stir us up to go forth as witnesses of this precious Saviour among all nations.

## A LIVING SACRIFICE

*"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."* Romans xii.1.

By the mercies of God—what a basis on which to appeal to God's people! Mercies which include our reconciliation to God by the death of His Son! What sacrifice might He not demand from us in response to the sacrifice of Calvary!

Paul speaks of a *living* sacrifice, he beseeches us to present our living bodies to God. Not just our souls or our spirits, mark you, but our bodies. The body is the instrument of the soul, for the soul can do nothing except via the body—even thinking involves the brain. Now when Paul speaks of a sacrifice, the image of a life laid down, of a dead body laid on the altar, rises before the mind; but the sacrifice God is asking for is not that. Yet our bodies, our living, active bodies, must be just as truly given up to Him—given up not to die (though some believers are even today being called to that) but to live utterly and completely for Him.

"I have my own life to live" is a sentiment often uttered, but the Christian ought not to speak in these terms. A Christian life only reaches its full potential when thus yielded to God. Paul elsewhere expresses another aspect when he says "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." Faith in Him, then, the remembrance of His love, and of the sacrifice by which He proved it, must be the strength of the life which is yielded to Him.

"A living sacrifice, *holy*"—can such an adjective be used of the body? Does not the teaching of this same epistle tell us that "the body is dead because of sin" (chapter viii.10)? Let us be clear that scripture gives no support to the heathen idea that matter is sinful, nor does it ever teach that the body itself is sinful. True, the activities of our bodies, before we came to Christ, were often sinful, but in Christ's death we are dead to sin. Now, the whole man—spirit, soul and body—is ransomed by the precious blood of Christ. Though the body is not yet delivered from the bondage of corruption

(Romans viii.21,23), it is *holy*, and the Holy Spirit possesses it as His temple.

“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (or, intelligent) service.” Now the Greek word for *service* used here usually, but not invariably, has the sense of *worship*, but the following verses, which fill out verse 1, show that *service* is here more suitable, though certainly worship is included. Another instance of this wider meaning is in John xvi.2, “whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”

“Intelligent service”—yes, the full power of mind and brain must direct the activities of the body yielded to God. Away with the notion that God has no use for the intellect! It is the undisciplined intellect, that sets itself up against God’s revelation, that leads men astray. The pride which exalts the intellect above other gifts of God is rebuked by the apostle’s word, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” But shoddy service is no more acceptable when offered to God than a blemished animal was in Old Testament days.

It is well to remember, too, that God’s path of service for us may bring more of endurance than of activity, more of apparent frustration than of achievement. For long years to have to wait on a sick and perhaps querulous relative, and to do so cheerfully, is a most demanding sacrifice. Perhaps the recollection that some are called to yield their bodies to suffer imprisonment and torture may strengthen us if we are tempted to think our lot a difficult one!

Then also while it is easy to understand that what we may call *direct* service is acceptable to God, scripture makes it plain that an ordinary, everyday working life can be equally so—it is a question of His calling. Joseph was just as truly yielded to the will of God when waiting on his fellow-prisoners as when in freedom he was sent to bear his father’s message to his brothers. How must the poor slaves at Colosse have rejoiced to hear that, in obeying in all things their masters

(Continued inside front cover)

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## MARY'S TRIBUTE

*"She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying."* (Mark xiv.8).

"She hath done what she could"—was this not the literal truth? Do not the Lord's words tell us how Mary felt? For she, if not others, seems to have grasped the fact that He was soon to die, and to die a shameful death at the hands of His enemies, as He had plainly foretold. What then was there that she could do for Him?

She could not turn back the tide of hatred which was gathering against Him; neither could it be her lot, as a woman, to stand by His side when they arrested Him. There was no gift with which she could now enrich Him, and the seamless robe which perhaps some loving disciple had earlier bestowed would now become the spoil of His executioners.

But if He were going to be thus humiliated, no chance to honour Him would be allowed her, so she would come beforehand to show her own estimate of the honour due even to His body. It was only a token, but **she did what she could**—she poured out the precious ointment—emblem of the worship of her heart.

E.H.C.

## “GOING FORTH EVERYWHERE”

Scripture teaches by exhortation and example. So following the Lord's parting commission to His disciples, to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”, we have the record of their beginning the task in the Acts of the Apostles. The power of the Holy Spirit is assured to them by their risen Lord, and the order of their witness is outlined to them (Acts i.8). The angelic announcement, in verse 11, of His return in the clouds of heaven is surely to give urgency to their activities rather than to remind them of the Lord's promise in John xiv.3 to come again and receive them unto Himself.

The problem of many languages would at first seem to complicate the task. It arose early in this world's history as the result of man's sinful lust for pride in his own achievements (Gen.xi). The confusion and scattering at Babel was a divine act to mark God's displeasure. In contrast, how gracious His purpose to choose Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified, for the promised out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, and where some sixteen nations were represented at the feast. They each heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God, as the Spirit-filled disciples began to speak with other tongues (Acts ii.4,11). This fulfilment of the Lord's promise in Mark xvi. gave a great initial impetus to the apostles' witness. As far as we know, the gift of tongues was not repeated in Judaea; indeed, only two other instances, both exceptional, are recorded—at Caesarea (x.46), and at Ephesus (xix.6). No doubt the gift was available, where needed, as the work spread to new fields, and before the scriptures were completed. Alas, such is human nature, it soon became a snare, as at Corinth; while still in some quarters a spurious psychological manifestation is sought after.

From early days the enemy's opposition to this new work stirred up bitter persecution of the disciples. In the wisdom of God their consequent scattering led to a rapid expansion of the preaching. Wherever they went, they witnessed to Christ as Saviour and Lord. Here is the example for believers right down to our day: we should each and all be doing just this.

But the objective in the great commission in Matt. xxviii. was "all nations", in contrast to the special place Israel had in God's earlier revelations of Himself to men. So following the preaching of Peter and John at Jerusalem, we find Philip, a man "of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom", going down to Samaria and preaching Christ in the wider field directed by the Lord. The response was immediate: "the people with one accord gave heed;" and there was great joy in that city.

But "the uttermost part of the earth" is now the object of God's gracious purpose, for the glory of the Son. How significant, therefore, the three remarkable conversions following, in chapters viii. ix. and x. of representatives of the three divisions of the human race after the flood, stemming from the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen. ix.19).

### NOAH'S PROPHECY

The prophecy uttered by Noah in verses 25 to 27 changes the order. Firstly, verse 25, "Cursed be Canaan (the son of Ham); a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Who but a God of infinite grace would have ordered that one of these erstwhile subservient races should be first beyond Judaea and Samaria to hear the Gospel? Philip the evangelist is directed by *the Holy Spirit* to meet the treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia (himself possibly a Jew), returning from Jerusalem, and finds him reading Isaiah liii. in his chariot. So, "beginning at the same scripture he preached unto him Jesus." Him he joyfully received, and was baptized before proceeding to carry the Gospel down into Africa.

Secondly, verse 26, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant". From the Semitic races, Jehovah chose Abraham and gave him the promise "I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. xii.2,3). Alas, the descendants of Shem refused and crucified their Messiah, and bitterly persecuted His disciples. Then in the unfolding purposes of God, one of their number, Saul of Tarsus, is singled out and addressed in the Hebrew tongue by *the Lord Jesus*,

speaking from heaven. He is convicted, and converted; the chief of sinners becomes the chosen vessel to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel (Acts ix.15). After labouring abundantly in many fields, he writes from the Roman prison, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Eph. i.3). Noah's prophecy is fulfilled.

Thirdly, verse 27, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Israel forfeited her distinctive place, and the great empires predicted in Daniel ii. dominated much of Europe and the Middle East, including Palestine. In Acts x., a representative of Japheth, the Roman centurion Cornelius, resident at Caesarea has *an angelic messenger*, directing him to send to Joppa for Peter. He obeys, and is rewarded with hearing what is a pattern for world-wide preaching of the Gospel (x.34-43). Immediately, both he and all his house, believing the word they had heard, received the Holy Spirit and were baptized. When Peter reported this to the other apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, they glorified, not the servant, but God, saying "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts xi.18).

These three remarkable conversions, each by divine intervention, are described in detail as though to emphasize that God hastens to implement the promise to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD-WIDE WITNESS

The second half of the book of Acts shows how this world-wide witness developed. As assemblies of believers multiplied, particular servants of the Lord were called by the Holy Spirit to go forth under His direction to distant parts. In Acts xiii.2-4 we have a pattern for missionary work for all time. The assembly at Antioch, recognizing that Barnabas and Saul had been called by the Holy Spirit, after prayer and fasting expressed fellowship with them by laying hands upon them, and "let them go" (JND). In the providence of God the good roads provided for the Roman legions facilitated their journeys. The Greek language in common

use was admirably suited to the precise setting forth of the word of the truth of the Gospel. The New Testament God-breathed scriptures are preserved for our guidance as to the content and methods of preaching.

What are we doing with the increasing opportunities available to us today? We have portions of the word of God translated into 1,400 languages, and printed in enormous quantities by the various Bible societies; we have abundance of Christian literature, tape recordings useful to the illiterate, we have world-wide postal services, radio broadcasting which surmounts all racial frontiers, and easy and rapid travelling. Even so, the pertinent question is, do we know anything of the apostle's deep feeling—"Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel" (I Cor. ix.16)? Do we accept the responsibility of being ambassadors for Christ, each in his own sphere (2 Cor. v.20)?

We are not all called or equipped to serve on the mission field; not all are evangelists; yet all may "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. iv.5). We must support with our prayers, both in our homes and in the assembly, those labourers who have gone abroad, whose needs are known to us. Paul desired prayer "that God would open unto us a door of utterance" (Col. iv.3), "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified" (2 Thess. iii.1). May love for them and for the Lord they serve stimulate us to follow the example of the assembly at Philippi, whose gifts sent to Paul were "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Phil. iv.18).

H. HARLE

## THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD

(Ephesians vi.10-18)

The Christian lives in an enemy's country. The world is in rebellion against its Maker, having given its allegiance to the arch rebel, Satan. He is its prince. But God is actively seeking to have rebellious men reconciled to Himself, having laid a perfect basis for reconciliation in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is His message of reconciliation. This reconciliation Satan opposes by every means in his

power, for every soul reconciled to God represents a shrinking of his kingdom. Hence every believer becomes a special target for Satan's attacks.

Unconverted men, often unconscious of their state of rebellion, are quite unaware also of Satan's working in them. He is, as Paul states clearly, "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. ii.2).

We who believe have been delivered from the power of darkness, and have been translated into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. i.13). Yet all the time we live in this world, we are surrounded by enemy forces: Satan and his hosts of evil spirits, and men and women still subject to his domination, though unconscious of it. If this were all, we might have every reason to feel despondent, but though in ourselves we are weakness itself, we are exhorted to **"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."**

The Lord Jesus defeated Satan at the Cross, because Satan's power over man is based on his being a sinner, and the Lord Jesus, in suffering for sin, swept away this power for every one who believes in Him as Saviour. The resurrection was the proof of Satan's defeat. Now the Lord's mighty power is available for those that obey Him. It is not yet His will to take His own out of the world, away from the scene of conflict, but He strengthens them to endure it. In this they tread the same path that He trod, and facing similar experiences, and looking to Him as their strength as well as their example, they learn to know Him as they never would have done if He had taken them straight to heaven.

The resources which He provides are referred to in Ephesians vi. as an *armour*, in keeping with the thought of spiritual conflict in which we are engaged. Let us be clear that Satan has no power over men except by deceiving them, and while unconverted men are blinded by him, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them", the Christian's eyes have been opened. As the Lord Jesus said to Paul, "delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." The danger now is of our being once more deceived by his wiles.

**“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”**

Lest there should be any misunderstanding, Paul emphasizes the fact that our conflict is a spiritual one.

**“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.”**

How well it would have been if Christians had always remembered these words! From the time of the Crusades onwards, again and again the power of the sword has been used ostensibly to fight the Lord's battles, with the inevitable result of doing immense harm to His cause.

**“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (or, heavenly) places.”**

The vast conspiracy of evil that Satan has organized in this world is like an iceberg of which we see but a small part, but some of its manifestations are obvious enough. All human religions, most philosophical theories, and all the various ways in which Christianity is corrupted, proceed from Satan's efforts to lead men away from faith in Christ; political and commercial systems are manipulated by him to keep men occupied with present things instead of eternal ones; while the entertainment media provide everything to help enslave men to their baser desires.

By such means as these the world is kept under Satanic control, and believers, being in the world, are exposed to the same influences. To classify the evils the Christian has to surmount as “the world, the flesh and the devil” is rather misleading, for these are all thoroughly intertwined. The devil uses the combined temptations of the flesh and the world to maintain his own influence.

“Spiritual wickedness in heavenly places” implies that Satan's efforts are employed in direct opposition to God's purposes of blessing. He accuses those for whom Christ intercedes (Rev.xii.10; Rom.viii.33,34,38; Luke xxii.31,32).

Against all these Satanic devices God has provided the remedy for His people. It is expressed in the words

**“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”**



We will examine the armour in detail presently, but first let us note that it is *our responsibility* to assume it. In other words, we must recognize the reality of the forces opposed to us; we must acknowledge that we are helpless of ourselves to counter them. Furthermore, the words "the whole armour" warn us that it is what *God* has provided that we stand in need of, and we cannot afford to neglect any part.

"In the evil day"—when is that? Whatever it may have meant for the Ephesians, clearly none of us knows what special trials lie round the corner for *us*, and it behoves us to be ready.

**"And having done all, to stand."**

We are in the position of Wellington's army at Waterloo—awaiting the arrival of overwhelming forces, but meanwhile it is vital that we maintain our ground. The promise is, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly", but meanwhile it often seems that the world sweeps all before it; that we make no impression at all; that we might as well give up; that we are such desperate failures that we'd better keep quiet. Let us recognize that all this is just the enemy's propaganda, and that it is vital for us just to go on living out the Christian life day by day, to maintain the truth we have learnt to be divine, and to keep our eyes fixed on the Master. "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

**"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."**

The more literal translation "having girt about your loins with truth," draws our attention to the *action*, and makes it more of a conscious thing. This is the first part of the soldier's equipment, and so represents truth as the fundamental requirement of the position which the Christian warrior takes up. God has ensured that the gospel is based upon well ascertained facts: "**this thing was not done in a corner**" (Acts xxvi.26). The Roman centurion verified the Saviour's death, and twelve apostles bore witness to His resurrection and ascension. Almost the whole of the New Testament was read and accepted as "scripture" throughout the whole church, before the last of the apostles had passed away.

The world is full of falsity—false assumptions, false pretensions and claims. Moreover, the unconverted man has never faced the truth about himself, or his condition, or his relationship to God. In coming to Christ a man's eyes are opened to

know the truth, and he learns how fully and completely Christ has put everything right, bringing everything into the light of God's presence, and yet providing the means of justification and cleansing. These things we must bind upon us firmly—like a soldier buckling on his belt, as something he can then take for granted—not like some so-called Christian teachers, who are for ever questioning the foundations of the faith. The loins stand for our innermost being, and the truth of these things ought to be part of us, if we are to stand firmly. When we are asked, "What right have you to be so confident? Do you think you are any better than others?" we should be ready to own that our only hope is in what Christ has done for us.

It also follows that the Christian must ensure that truthfulness governs all his relations with men, believers and unbelievers alike. The trickery and deceit which play so large a part in so many worldly dealings must have no part in a Christian's life.

In assembly matters also, this is of paramount importance. In some quarters there is a tendency to imagine that all is well if controversial matters are kept dark. How different was the apostle Paul's practice! For he writes "not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Finally, truth must govern our thoughts and ways in our communion with the Lord Himself. Nothing else is possible, if our souls are to go on with Him. "Thou requirest truth in the inward parts" (Psalm li.). And this is, of course, the foundation of truthfulness in our dealings with men. The Christian's life must be a whole, with no part sealed off in a watertight compartment.

**"And having on the breastplate of righteousness."**

This follows closely what we have been considering, for there can be no doubt that the righteousness spoken of is *practical righteousness*. The righteousness which we have in Christ comes later, in the helmet of salvation. How then, does practical uprightness in our daily life secure us in Satan's attacks? This is easily seen if we consider what happens if we fail. If Satan, acting through unbelieving men, of course, can justly accuse us of unworthy behaviour, he wins an immediate victory in that our testimony is destroyed. Men can say, and

do say, that if we are no better than the world around, of what use is Christianity? They ought of course to say, of what use is *our* Christianity; but the enemy is not logical, except when it suits him. We can only defeat such an argument by behaviour which is consistently upright, and gives no scope to anyone to point the finger.

We say "justly accuse us", but even against unjust accusations the breastplate is a sure defence, enabling us to hold up our heads. We may have to wait for the day of Christ for our vindication, but we can await that with confidence if our conscience is clear. The world is usually satisfied with not being *discovered* in wrong doing, but this is not good enough for those that have to do with God. If our own conscience is not at rest, the devil has gained an advantage. Our peace then disappears, prayer becomes an impossibility, and faith itself becomes dimmed. As soldiers we have no strength at all. To remember that at the judgment seat of Christ all will be brought into the light, and to have the glory of the Lord before us always, will prevent the enemy finding chinks in our armour.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## TWO UNFAITHFUL PROPHETS

In 1 Kings xiii. we read a strange and solemn story. Jeroboam had established his idolatrous temples at Dan and Beth-el, and although he had appointed priests to serve at these centres we find him at the beginning of this chapter himself offering incense at the altar in Beth-el. We read in verse 11 that there was an old prophet living there, but it may be that he was not in the right spiritual condition for God to speak through him. We are not told, in fact, that he registered any protest against the false worship that had been set up in the very place where once God revealed Himself to their ancestor Jacob. At any rate, a man of God from the neighbouring kingdom of Judah was sent to cry against the altar. It is not often that an inanimate object is addressed in this way in scripture: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee."

Perhaps we find a parallel in Jeremiah's words: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord," and the words of the Lord Himself, as He wept over the unfaithful city: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Of course in these instances, the word is really addressed to the inhabitants of the earth, and the people of Jerusalem. So here, Jeroboam recognized that the words addressed to the altar were really a rebuke to himself.

On this occasion God gave a sign to Jeroboam that the prophecy would be fulfilled. The altar would be rent, and the ashes poured out. This sign did happen, but not before the idolatrous king had lifted up his hand, to give command to seize the man of God. Immediately that hand was dried up, so that he was unable to draw it back again. It is worthy of note that God often gives signs when a new regime begins, so that men are not left in ignorance as to God's will and purpose. We may instance the time of the children of Israel's departure from Egypt and their entry into the promised land. Similarly the years of the Lord's ministry and the times of the apostles were characterized by notable signs and wonders. God had spoken to Jeroboam through His servant Ahijah, but Jeroboam had not heeded. Now He gives him another warning, and confirms it with unmistakable signs of divine authority.

The first reaction of the ungodly man to God's messenger is usually open hostility and persecution. We find this again in Acts. Jeroboam, however, was frightened when the power of God smote him physically, and he immediately changed his attitude, relying on the mercy of God to restore him in answer to the prayer of the man of God. This is a typical inconsistency of human nature. Men gladly avail themselves of God's mercies, but are not willing to be obedient to His word. The man of God did pray, and the king's hand was restored.

When the enemy does not succeed by open opposition, he often turns to patronage and flattery. We find this in the book of Nehemiah, where we read that it grieved the enemies of God's people exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. At first they attempted by

ridicule and open opposition to stop the work of rebuilding the wall, but when this failed, they said: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono," but Nehemiah was not deceived by this apparent desire for co-operation. Jeroboam too, seeing that his attempt to arrest the man of God was frustrated, now turns to a more subtle manner of making his ministry ineffective. Paul says that we are not ignorant of Satan's devices, and yet God's people are constantly being compromised by the patronage of the world, and their testimony is rendered ineffective, as was that of Lot in Sodom.

"Come home with me," says Jeroboam "and refresh thyself and I will give thee a reward." What reward from the prince of this world can compare with that laid up in heaven for the believer that seeks to walk with his Lord through this world as He walked, a despised and rejected stranger? This man of God from Judah, however, had already been warned before he set out, and he faithfully rejected the king's offer of hospitality. "If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place." This is the language of Abram when he had rescued Lot out of his plight. The king of Sodom said: "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself," but Abram was not deceived. "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich." No wonder God's message to him was: "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward." To the believer, who possesses all things in Christ, the world's rewards do not count for much.

So the prophet, so far obedient to the word of God, went back another way. It would have been happy if this had been the end of the story, but God does not hide from us the failings of the men chosen to serve Him. What an encouragement to those who realize all too well their own inadequacies!

## THE OLD PROPHET

The old prophet living in Beth-el is a bit of a puzzle. His sons came and told him all that the younger prophet had said and done. What sentiments moved him to saddle his ass and seek out this man? It may have been a real desire for fellowship,

or to show godly hospitality, but one fears that he may also have been jealous that God had by-passed him and used a younger man from another kingdom to bring His message. Eli had also had this experience, when the Lord entrusted to the young Samuel a message that the older man was not in a state to receive. In this case, however, we see a becoming humility in the old priest, who says, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." It is most humbling for an older brother, especially if he is out of touch with the Lord, to find God using a younger servant to make His will known, but it is well when the message is received in a spirit of humility and obeyed accordingly.

The old prophet, on the other hand, not only insists on overriding the convictions of the man from Judah, but also claims that an angel had spoken to him, reversing God's previous explicit command. His words remind us of the first recorded words of the enemy: "Yea, hath God said?" If the man of God from Judah had considered, he would have realized that the word once spoken to him would not be changed. God cannot lie, and He cannot go back on his word. As Paul says to the Galatians: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." It is vital for young Christians to test everything taught them, by comparing with the word of God, as did the Bereans of old. On the other hand, older Christians should be most careful not to discourage the babes in Christ, or turn them aside by anything contrary to scripture.

While they were eating together, the true word of God came to the old prophet, and this time there was no mistake about it. "Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord . . . thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers." Not a word of his own sin, in bringing the other man from the path of obedience. He faithfully delivers the solemn message and reminds the man of God of God's own command. There must be many souls today on a wrong path because they have been led away by false teachers, but while these leaders are indeed heaping up judgment for themselves, those that are being so led are responsible to walk in obedience to the word that they have received, and the pursuit of a wrong path will inevitably bring its disastrous reward.

The word spoken by the old prophet came to pass. The lion killed the disobedient man of God as he went his way, but was restrained from devouring the carcase or attacking the ass. When the old prophet heard what had happened there was still no word of remorse or repentance for his own part in the sad events. He says merely: "It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord; therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord which He spake unto him." It was all very well to bring the carcase back and bury the man of God in his own grave; he might well acknowledge that the word spoken by him would surely come to pass. Had he no thought that he was responsible for this man's death and for the disobedience of which he now speaks so readily? But actions speak louder than words, and we must hope that his action was meant to own this.

It would be well for older Christians to learn a lesson from this sad history. How easily may we be the cause of another's making shipwreck of the faith! When we condemn a younger brother or sister for turning aside, might it not be wiser to examine ourselves, to see if we have not in some measure been responsible for this? Surely, too, we may all learn a lesson from the other man, not to let anyone rob us of what we have learned of Christ, to hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown.

The sad conclusion of this chapter draws our attention to the one for whom the man of God was sent in the first place. "After these things Jeroboam returned not from his evil way," so that nothing could prevent God's judgment falling upon him and his house, "to destroy it from off the face of the earth." How solemn it is to receive a special message from God, and to give no heed! It is well to remind ourselves again of the verse in Hebrews: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

A. RETALICK

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## EDITORIAL

ERNEST PETTMAN

The majority of our readers will know of the Home-call of Ernest Pettman, until this year Editor of "WORDS of HELP", who passed into the presence of his Lord on 25th May.

When ill-health compelled him to relinquish the editorship he sought to continue writing, but was only able to contribute two more pieces, the second of which appears in this issue.

Many of God's people can testify to the helpfulness of his ministry, both oral and written, over many years, but only those who have had the privilege of working with him in the Lord's things know how wise and well balanced was his judgement, how helpful his counsel, how unfailing his graciousness and courtesy, and how genuine his deep humility.

He was always appreciative of the labours of others, and he combined wide sympathies with faithfulness and zeal for the truth. The object of his life was to honour and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

*(Continued from inside back cover)*

recall the Saviour's word to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

In supplication for all saints, and especially for the servants of the Lord, let us be diligent and persevering always.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## ARGUMENT IN PRAYER

Those who have read Dr. A. T. Pierson's book "George Muller of Bristol", will be aware that he uses the expression which forms the title of this article to describe what appears to have been a special feature of the prayers of the remarkable man of whom he wrote. Indeed, George Muller's own words in connection with the text which became one of the foundation stones of his orphanage work—"a father of the fatherless . . . is God in His holy habitation" (Psalm lxxviii.5)—confirm this:

"By the help of God, this shall be my argument before Him, respecting the orphans, in the hour of need. He is their Father, and therefore has pledged Himself, as it were, to provide for them; and I have only to remind Him of the need of these poor children in order to have it supplied."

Dr. Pierson goes on to say, "This method of *holy argument*—ordering our cause before God, as an advocate would plead before a judge—is not only almost a lost art\*, but to many it actually seems almost puerile. And yet it is abundantly taught and exemplified in Scripture."

Let us consider some of the examples which come down to us through the centuries.

### ABRAHAM—Genesis xviii.16-33.

Jehovah had come down to see the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah which cried aloud for judgment, and He revealed His purpose to His friend Abraham. As "the men" turned their faces and steps toward Sodom, we read that Abraham stood before the Lord to intercede for the guilty city, knowing that his nephew Lot, whom Peter refers to as a *just* man (2 Peter ii.7), was there. Serve Lot right, some might say, that he should be destroyed with the other inhabitants: if he chooses to spend his life and vex his righteous soul amidst such appalling wickedness, how can he expect God to discriminate in his favour when the moment of judgment comes?

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\*How far this is true it is difficult for us to say: only God knows what prayers He receives. Perhaps Dr. Pierson was thinking of public prayer. (Ed.)

Abraham has learned however that God does discriminate between guiltless and guilty. So he enquires of God, "Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" And in his boldness he argues that "the Judge of all the earth" must do right. His justice must be demonstrated for all to see. No group of mankind must be in a position to challenge the rightness of God's dealings: this was unthinkable to Abraham. So he proceeds with the various stages of his intercession until God undertakes not to destroy the city should He find 10 righteous persons therein.

In the event, this wonderful intercession proved not to have gone quite far enough. Ten righteous persons could not be found in the doomed cities: so the fire and brimstone fell. But God vindicated both His righteousness and His mercy by bringing Lot, together with his wife and two daughters, to safety outside Sodom. What happened to Lot's wife subsequently is another story.

**MOSES**—Numbers xiv.13-21.

It is impossible to read Moses' pleading with God on this occasion without being profoundly moved.

The people of Israel had shown, yet again, their disbelief of God's power to fulfil His promise to bring them into the land of Canaan. It was an intolerable situation. How could the God Who had done so much for them be expected to allow His people to go on and on in such unbelief? No wonder He declared His intention to smite them with pestilence and to disinherit them. Could anyone complain that in so doing God would have been unjust?

Certainly not: yet the great-hearted Moses found an argument to use with God to avert Israel's threatened extinction. We paraphrase in our homely language what Moses said to God—"If You do destroy Israel, the Egyptians will hear of it, and they will pass the news on to other nations who have heard that You are Israel's Protector: they in turn will say You failed to carry out Your promise. So the glory of Your great and wonderful name will be tarnished."

What a plea! What holy arguing by Moses! Dare we say that the Lord could not resist such an appeal, and that He could only reply, "I have pardoned according to *thy* word?" It is a striking example of prevailing prayer. Yet we must

note that although the people were preserved as a nation, God's very severe discipline was exercised in the case of those individuals of responsible age who had been guilty of unbelief: their carcasses fell in the wilderness; not one of them entered the promised land.

### **ELIJAH**—1 Kings xviii.

The occasion was yet another crisis in the history of Israel. The sin of the people in embracing the worship of Baal had incurred the withholding of rain, and consequent famine. But God had His prophet in reserve, and at an appropriate moment he came out of hiding to confront King Ahab and the false prophets on Mount Carmel.

It is always heartening to read this chapter, with the delicious irony of verse 27 where Elijah mocks the priests of Baal for their inability to obtain any answer from their god, and the final summing up in verse 29—"there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Of course there was not: Baal was a mere idol!

What a moment then arose for Elijah! How much hung upon his securing an answer from the living God! He would build his altar: he would lay the wood upon it, and the offering on top of the wood; then he would take the daring step of soaking the sacrifice with water, not once but three times. Then he would pray. One can almost hear the hush that came over all present as he does so. What shall he say to God? What argument will he use to secure such a manifestation of divine power as will ensure recognition of the true and living God?

Elijah's prayer was short and fervent. The argument he uses is clear enough—"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the LORD God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again" (verses 36, 37). He desires that the Lord God will attest that He alone is the living God, and that Elijah was the one He had appointed to represent Him in Israel at that time. Such was the special pleading of the man James declares to have been "subject to like passions as we are" (James v.17). But what does

human weakness and infirmity matter where God's honour is at stake? No wonder the answer on Mount Carmel was so abundant!

### **JEHOSHAPHAT**—2 Chronicles xx.

Surely, the extremities of God's people provide the opportunities for Him to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose trust is in Him.

The forces of Moab and Ammon combined to assail Jehoshaphat, who forthwith "set himself to seek the Lord"; moreover, "Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord." What an encouraging picture!

Then Jehoshaphat prayed—read verses 6-12—as they stood before the Lord with their little ones, their wives and their children. The purpose of the prayer was to express their weakness and dependence upon God, as we have it in verse 12—"for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us: neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." A frank confession indeed!

Space will not permit us to consider in detail the arguments Jehoshaphat used in his prayer. Our readers will do well to ponder these for themselves. To enumerate them, however, we have:

- i. God is the universal Ruler: none can withstand Him (verse 6):
- ii. God had already demonstrated His power by bringing His people into Canaan (verse 7):
- iii. God's promise to "a friend" (verse 7):
- iv. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (verses 8, 9):
- v. The obedience of Israel to the word of the Lord in not destroying the tribes of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, when they came out of Egypt (verses 10, 11).

Were not these arguments overwhelming? The remainder of the chapter provides God's answer.

Now three examples from the New Testament.

### **THE CENTURION**—Luke vii.1-10.

The display of the Lord's grace to this Gentile "outsider" is a splendid picture. Here was a man marked—surprisingly enough, considering his status in the community—by humility

and a sense of unworthiness. But the sickness of his servant was an urgent need which only Jesus could meet. So he sends the elders of the Jews to obtain His help. These men spoke for him: but as Jesus approached his dwelling, the centurion sent friends to stay His progress. "There is no need for You to come at all", he says; "just as I myself give orders that are immediately obeyed, so You need only to give *Your* command, for my servant to be healed."

Did the Lord resent this arguing? Not for a moment: He understood how the man felt, and appreciated the faith in his heart which prompted the centurion to say what he did. So far from expressing displeasure with the man's boldness, He commended him for a faith greater than anything He had met with in Israel. Needless to say, His healing power restored the servant to full health.

#### **THE CANAANITE WOMAN—Matthew xv.21-28.**

Yet again one outside the chosen race is commended for her faith. How little privilege of birth counted with our Saviour!

The woman sought the intervention of Jesus for the deliverance of her daughter from the power of a demon. But, because she sought His compassion on the ground of His being the Son of David, implying a *right* to blessing she did not possess, she needed to be put in her place. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel . . . . It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (verses 24, 26). Was this not sufficient to crush her? Would she not go back home, smarting with the sting of such a rebuke?

No: with a quick-witted riposte she argues, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Was that not an impertinent effort on her part to have the last word? The Lord did not think so. In sheer desperation she was using the only remaining argument she could think of. And how truly she spoke! Israel was careless enough as to the bounty which the Son of David had brought them. The crumbs fell from their table, and the women knew it. She would pick them up believing and gratefully.

Once again the Lord's commendation is earned and given.

Such faith as the woman had shown delighted His heart, and He sends her away with His "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt" ringing in her ears. Her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

### **THE EARLY CHURCH—Acts iv.23-30.**

It was a critical moment for the apostles, and for the whole church, when the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem commanded, with threat of punishment for disobedience, that the servants of the Lord were neither to speak nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Peter and John recognised at once that this order was in direct conflict with the command of the Lord, and they did not hesitate to reply that obedience to God must take precedence over compliance with civil authority, "for", they said, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Nevertheless, such defiance as this implied was not undertaken lightly, or without prayer to God, and that by the whole church assembled together. As another has said, "There was the intelligent use of scripture, as taught by the Holy Spirit. They had the Scriptures in their hearts, but now the Holy Spirit enabled them to select what was suitable for the occasion, and to apply scriptural light to their circumstances. Their prayer was therefore founded upon the written word of God. They would not seek to set aside the High Priest's authority without God's word for it. So they based their petition upon what God Himself had said."\* On this basis they asked confidently for boldness to "speak Thy word" and for tokens of mercy and healing that the name of Jesus might be magnified.

Such pleading prevailed with God. The place where they were assembled was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke the word of God with boldness. Great indeed were the unity and love which possessed the whole church; great the power with which the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great the grace that was upon them all.

Is there any special argument we in our day ought to be

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\*See article "United Prayer", by W. J. Hocking—WORDS OF HELP, May 1957, page 56.



using when we pray for a measure of revival from our present weakness and declension?

E. A. PETTMAN

## QUOTATIONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The value of the Old Testament today is an important matter, and one of the evidences of its inspiration is the way in which New Testament writers constantly refer to it as fully authoritative. This is particularly noticeable in the writings of Matthew and Paul: both these apostles were used to bring out truths that characterize the new dispensation, but as moved by the One Spirit Who had inspired the earlier writers, they carefully owned God's previous dealings and revelations, however surpassingly great His present ministrations.

Paul did not hesitate to quote the pagan poets, whether in addressing philosophers in Athens (Acts xvii.28) or in writing to a Gentile convert (Tit. i.12), when they happened to speak the truth; but the spiritual mind feels instinctively the difference between this and the appeal to the ancient oracles of God. We do well to ponder the fact that the Lord's three references to Deuteronomy when tempted by Satan—references to a book singled out for attack by modern criticism—were sufficient to defeat him at every point.

The subject of Old Testament quotations is a very large one, and we shall confine ourselves to some of the most instructive examples.

### A QUOTATION CUT SHORT

(Luke iv.16-30.)

“Rightly dividing the word of truth”, says the apostle (2 Tim. ii.15); and this involves among other things distinguishing between that which obtains at the present time, or is of permanent application, and that which is altogether future and prophetic. How perfectly this was displayed in the synagogue at Nazareth! The lowly Son of man, Who had in childhood, adolescence and manhood sat there sabbath after sabbath, as far as we know a silent listener, stood up

on that day to read in Isaiah lxi. He read as far as the words: "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"—then closed the book, returned it to the attendant, and sat down to teach. How startling this action must have seemed to His hearers! For the next words, "and the day of vengeance of our God" brought in precisely what this subject people looked for: they cherished sanguine hopes of a warrior Messiah who should deliver them from the hated Gentiles. But this was not to be at that time: in spite of John the Baptist's solemn warnings, the nation was totally unfit, morally, to become the leader of the nations—"the head, and not the tail"—as the prophet expressed it, and the day of their glory was postponed. The passage which the Lord read, while it implied His Messiahship, expressed His present ministry of grace. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself;" such was the *character* of His first coming: He was here to save and not to judge. This ministry was being exercised in Israel; but when He went on to remind His hearers of God's mercies to the Gentiles in the past, it was more than they could bear, and their anger exploded—a premonition of the nation's ultimate rejection of Himself expressed in the cross. Little did they realize that the atonement wrought out there was to be the very means of opening the floodgates of God's sovereign grace to Gentile sinners during this long-extended "acceptable year of the Lord".

Alas, the Gentile has not continued in the goodness of God: during long centuries the gospel has been replaced by the law, and in our day the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness. Israel, too, as a nation has continued in unbelief. So "the day of vengeance of our God" must come, as night follows day. The same hand that rolled up Isaiah's scroll must open the seven-sealed book (Rev. v.) with its fulness of judgments. The little open book (Rev. x.) foretelling the final brief crisis, must also be fulfilled. God will do His "strange work" of judgment (Is. xxviii.21), but only because the cleansing of the earth and the consequent blessings of Messiah's kingdom cannot be brought about in any other way. "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. xxvi.9).

Even so, how pleasant the contrast between "the acceptable

year of the Lord" and "the *day* of vengeance of our God"!

And this remarkable scene, while it shows the blessed Lord's complete knowledge of God's present and future ways, also manifests the perfection of His obedience (Ps. xl. 9-10): He would speak the words His Father had given Him, knowing beforehand how they would antagonize His hearers, even as later on, in the synagogue at Capernaum, He stressed spiritual truths at which He knew most of His professed disciples would stumble (John vi.).

A. C. McCANN

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

## THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD

(*Continued*)

**"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."**

Perhaps it is somewhat surprising to find such words in connection with conflict, but they bring us back to our starting point—the world may be in league with Satan, but with men God is seeking reconciliation, and it is this reconciliation which Satan opposes so fiercely. It follows then that the gospel of peace—of reconciliation to God—is a powerful weapon in our armoury.

Our feet are to be shod with it—wherever we go we ought to be prepared to carry the gospel message, to bring before men the divine invitation to "reason together" (Isaiah i.18), that they may be able to enter into the peace that Christ has made.

Naturally then peaceableness must characterize our own attitude towards men. This is apt to be difficult because we so often need to contend for righteousness, to set our face against the crookedness and dishonesty which are so prevalent today. Hence we need much wisdom, much grace. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." It is so easy to have too much salt!

Furthermore, for our feet to be shod with the gospel of peace, our minds must be taken up with the very thing which the Lord Jesus is engaged with, and this leads to communion with Him. Thus our own hearts will be maintained in peace.

See then how effective this piece of armour is! Yet how often do we fail to wear it.

**“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (one).”**

The word used here refers to the large, oblong shield, which covered almost the whole body of the soldier. Thus sheltered, all the enemy's fiery darts—missiles with flaming heads—would fail to harm or dismay him. Satan has many such weapons in his armoury, the main purpose of which is to frighten us from standing firm, for he knows he cannot *harm* those who belong to Christ. The shield of faith is the answer to them all.

A favourite dart is the suggestion that we are fighting a losing battle, we are a feeble folk, and our religion is out of date, an old-fashioned superstition that intelligent people have long ago discarded. Now apart from its falsity—for more and more widely is it being recognized that only in Christianity is there an answer to the problems of today—this attack is only effective if it can cause us to *look around* instead of “*looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of faith”. Faith then is our shield, faith which keeps our victorious Forerunner in mind. He Himself was opposed by all the religious leaders of His day, and was once forsaken by large numbers of His own disciples. “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?” was said. But faith tells us that He is now on the throne of power. He promised that the gates of Hades should not prevail against His church. The fight is still on, but the promise holds.

Another dart concerns ourselves. Others may be fighting a good fight, but what about me? My frequent failures might make me wonder if I ever have truly believed. What is faith's answer? Surely that just as at the beginning the gospel message taught me I could find no resting place in any good deeds of my own, so today all that I have to rest upon is my Saviour's love and faithfulness, and the precious blood which cleansed me from *all* sin. No failures of mine can affect these things, so let me continue to trust Him.

A favourite shaft of the enemy, apt to raise doubts in our hearts and so enfeeble our stand, is the ancient problem of human suffering, endured even by the best men and women,

or by little children. If one of our own loved ones is concerned the "fiery dart" is even more dreadful. Or it may be we ourselves that suffer. People often say that these things make it impossible to believe in a beneficent Creator.

Now the teaching that everything in the world is just as God would have it, which is the real basis of this objection, is so plainly contrary to scripture that we should beware of tacitly accepting it. Faith in His word tells us that much suffering is the inevitable result, directly or indirectly, of human sin, and of man's having subjected himself to Satan's dominion. Also, we are not isolated units, but are all part of the one human family. Yet after allowance has been made for all these things, much remains that will puzzle and distress us, unless we remember Calvary. A beneficent Creator? Beneficence is too pale a word to describe the love displayed there, when the Creator suffered for the sins of His creatures, in order that sin with all its consequences of ruin and sorrow might be put away for ever. Things we don't understand must be looked at in the light of what God *has* made known. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son"—if this was His love for the world, how much more must He love those who now believe in and honour His Son! So the shield of faith alone can quench this dart. His love demands our trust.

The shield of faith must be actively used. "Wherewith ye shall be able to quench" suggests this. And faith must be kept fresh by feeding it on the word of God, on those divine promises of which the Bible is so full. And while the shield is our protection, it is to protect us while we stand firm for the truth, and bear witness to our absent Lord.

**"And take the helmet of salvation."**

While the shield is to be *used*, the helmet is on the contrary a "fit and forget" piece of armour. That is to say, it signifies the *assurance* of salvation, through God's grace, which enables the Christian warrior to forget himself. For him it is no longer true, to quote the words of the old hymn, "'Tis a point I long to know, oft it causes anxious thought; do I love the Lord or no, am I His or am I not?" The problem of his own eternal salvation having been settled by confidence in the Saviour's word which says, "I give unto My sheep

eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand", he is enabled to give his whole mind to the advancement of the Saviour's cause, and the progress of the gospel. This is what it means, then, to wear the helmet of salvation. The idea that assurance of salvation breeds carelessness and self indulgence is thus the reverse of the truth, though no doubt it may be perverted to this. We may no longer be occupied with our helmet, but we must not take our eyes off our Saviour.

**"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."**

We saw at the beginning of our study, that it is needful to remember that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." So here the only sword for the Christian soldier is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. In Hebrews iv. this is described as "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." When it is called "the sword of the Spirit" it surely means that it is effective in the way described when it is used in dependence upon the Spirit's power.

The sword is a weapon both of defence and of offence. The example of the Lord Jesus in His encounters with Satan in the wilderness shows us how effective the word of God can be for defence. Each temptation He dealt with by reference to the appropriate scripture, and Satan could gain no advantage against Him. Thus, "taking the sword of the Spirit" necessitates such familiarity with the scriptures that, taught by the Spirit, the needed answer comes to mind whatever the temptation. This of course is the ideal, and we may well feel how far short we come of it in practice. We need then to make it our continual endeavour to know more of God's word. Only, familiarity with the scriptures by itself is not sufficient—we need also an obedient heart and a subject will. How true was this of the Lord Jesus! If we allow the word of God to discern the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, we shall be fitted to wield the sword effectively against Satan.

Now can the sword be used offensively, to make an advance into Satan's own territory? How can we use it to win Satan's

territory for God? This surely is the very thing we are exhorted to do: to hold forth the word of life (Phil. ii.16); to preach the word (2 Tim. iv.2); to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation (2 Cor. v.20). God's way is always to change the hearts and minds of men by His word, through the power of His Spirit, into conformity with His own will—in this way is Satan defeated.

**“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”**

### STANDING . . . PRAYING . . . WATCHING.

Though clad with all the armour God provides, the Christian soldier will not be able to continue to stand unless he also prays. The mention of prayer reminds us of another vital factor—he does not fight alone. As Elisha said to his trembling servant, when he saw the hosts of Syria, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings vi.16). Prayer brings all the power of God to our aid. Even the Lord Jesus received strength from an angel—bodily strength perhaps, for His ordeal (Luke xxii.43).

As to spiritual strength, Paul prayed that the saints should be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man,” and John reminds us that “greater is He that is in you (i.e., the Holy Spirit) than he that is in the world (i.e., Satan). By prayer we are enabled to draw upon these divine resources, both for ourselves and for fellow believers. By prayer every part of the armour is made more effective, for it is spiritual armour, and will not remain in place automatically! So we must pray always, never letting up, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

**“And watching thereunto.”**

By prayer the Christian soldier is brought to understand the will of his Captain, but he must be alert for this. He needs to watch also for the enemy's moves—to be ready to recognize his attacks upon the truth and to counter them. Other saints also—those facing special trials or temptations; young believers, in what is in many ways one of the most testing times ever—for all such prayer is the Christian's privilege. We  
*(Continued on inside front cover)*

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## **TWO SERVANTS OF GOD IN THE DAYS OF AHAB**

The days of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel were dangerous days for the worshippers of Jehovah. The worship of Baal had been introduced by Jezebel, and the followers of the true God were persecuted relentlessly. Many faithful prophets were slaughtered, and a hundred of them only escaped because Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house, a true follower of the God of Israel, had hidden them in a cave and fed them.

Elijah's service is well known. He warned Ahab that henceforth no rain or dew would fall except at his word, so that the resulting famine might prove who was the true God. Then he fled to hide by the brook Cherith.

**Both these men put their lives at risk for the Lord, Obadiah equally with Elijah.** Some people criticize Obadiah, because he remained in Ahab's house, while Elijah had to flee. But then, who would have sheltered the hundred prophets if Obadiah had not been in Ahab's house? Similarly, later on, did not Jehosheba serve the Lord in secret, in the royal house itself, by protecting the young prince Joash from Athaliah's vengeance?

God has His servants in all kinds of places, and He uses them as He thinks fit. Let us beware especially of finding fault with those in places of danger, if we ourselves are in safety.

E.H.C.

*(Continued from inside back cover)*

of Him." Jehovah said, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth Me" (Jeremiah ix.23,24).

G. S. PURNELL

*(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly")*

## THE PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH

(Read 1 Timothy iii.15,16.)

In this day when evil teaching is rampant and satanic cults are springing up on every hand, it is good to be reminded that the assembly has the God-given responsibility to present the truth before the world. Paul says as much in his letter to Timothy when he gives instructions for suitable behaviour in the house of God, the church (or assembly) of the living God, the pillar and ground (or support) of the truth.

When the Lord Jesus was here on earth, it was not only that He bore witness to the truth, but He *was* the truth (John xiv.6). Now that He is glorified in heaven, the assembly has the privilege and responsibility to maintain the truth on earth. How important then is the function of the assembly in an evil day like this! The word "pillar" suggests display or witness; the "ground" or "base" is that which supports. The assembly is the pillar on which the truth is inscribed, upheld and supported before the world. We, as individual members of the assembly, are exhorted to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life (Phil.ii.15,16). Here in 1st Timothy the *corporate* witness of the assembly is emphasized. However much the assembly has failed in its responsibility, it remains true that in the purposes of God the assembly as established by Him upon the earth is the witness and support of the truth. Apart from creation itself, God has no other witness on the earth. Let us then make every endeavour to answer to God's great purpose, even in a day of ruin when the professing church has so sadly failed in its corporate testimony. How solemn to contemplate that when the church is gone from the earth, men will be given up to a strong delusion, as 2 Thess.ii. makes plain!

In this epistle Paul refers to certain fundamental doctrines of the faith, which embody the truth which the assembly is responsible to proclaim.

First is that faithful saying which is presented before men for their acceptance: "**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**" (1 Tim.i.15). This is the very message of the gospel which reveals the grace of God that can bless even the chief of sinners. To illustrate the wonder of the grace that had

saved him, the apostle refers to his unconverted days and speaks of himself as "a blasphemer and persecutor, and an insolent, overbearing man" (JND). Such was the man in whom God was pleased to display His mercy, grace and longsuffering (verses 13-16). The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is thus presented as an outstanding illustration of the long-suffering that is made known in the glad tidings of God's grace to all who should believe on Him to life eternal. No wonder the very recital of this surpassing grace leads Paul to break out into a doxology: "Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to to the ages of ages" (verse 17, JND).

The second doctrinal statement is found in chapter ii.5,6. **"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all."** This statement is given as the proof that God desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. To this end the earnest prayers of the saints are requested (verses 1-3).

The unity of the Godhead is the great foundation truth of the Old Testament, while the distinctive feature of the present dispensation of grace is that there is one Mediator between God and men. That one Mediator is a man, in order that God may be known to men, and that man's great need as a sinner may be righteously met. The Man, Christ Jesus, is the Daysman or Umpire that Job longed for, the One alone competent to lay His hands upon both, thus upholding the righteous requirements of God on the one hand and meeting the guilt of the sinner on the other.

The perfection of His mediatorship is that He gave Himself a ransom for all. The ransom is available for all, but it is only made good in the case of those who believe. As with the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, it is *unto all*, but only *upon all that believe* (Rom.iii.22). In this connection it is interesting to notice that in Mark x.45 and Matt. xx.28 our Lord says, "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom *for* (Gk. instead of) many," that is, instead of those who believe. Christ died *for* (on behalf of) all men, and *instead of* many. All this is surely a very precious consignment of truth given to the assembly to be upheld

before the world.

The third statement of doctrine unfolds the mystery of godliness or piety, and is intimately connected with the corporate testimony of the assembly as the pillar and support of the truth. **“Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory”** (iii.16).

The secret of godliness lies in the knowledge of God manifested in and through the Person of Christ. As one writer puts it, “The mystery of piety, which lies at the very centre of what the assembly maintains before the world, is great, and relates essentially to the Person of Christ” (J. N. Darby).

In Christ God has been *manifested in flesh*, and the incarnate Word has tabernacled among men (John i.14). He was *justified in the Spirit* in all the perfect holiness of His pathway here, and finally marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection (Rom.i.4). Then in Christ as man, God was *seen of angels*, not only through His incarnation but also in resurrection, for when He ceased to be seen by men on earth He was visible to angels as a man in heaven.

He was *“preached among the nations”* and *“believed on in the world.”* It was a Person Who was preached, not a creed, Christ being uplifted as the Object of faith. Lastly, He was *“received up in glory”*, the fitting climax of His life of perfect godliness on earth. For if He came down in love, as another has aptly expressed it, He went up in righteousness, and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The fourth and last doctrinal passage occurs in chapter vi.15,16. Here the apostle is giving a final charge to Timothy, to be faithfully kept in view of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in that day of glory will show **“Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see”**.

It has been well said that the glory of His appearing will bring with it an answer to any little faithfulness on our part, as indeed it will be the glorious answer to the perfect faithfulness

of Christ, Who was ever the true and faithful witness in His path of service and suffering here. Not only so, but there will be a full display of what God is. It will be manifested to all the world (what is already known to faith) that in Christ God is revealed as the blessed and only Ruler, the King of those that reign and the Lord of those that rule, the One Who in the Majesty of His Deity alone has essential immortality, and Who dwells in light unapproachable. Well might the apostle add, **“To Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”**

The coming of Christ to save sinners, the mediatorial and atoning work of the cross, the profound and unique truth concerning the Person of Christ, the majesty and nature of God which will be demonstrated so clearly before the world at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ—all these are great foundation truths of our faith to be maintained and proclaimed by the assembly. But as the epistle teaches, these cannot be maintained apart from godly order in the assembly and consistent godly behaviour in our individual daily lives.

A. R. CREETH

## THE DIVINE WORKERS XLI

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

Luke xvii.11-19. “And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.” We see Him in the despised areas on His way to Jerusalem—“which killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee” (Luke xiii.34). Luke alone is led to give us this picture from the past. Were we not, ourselves, at one time in the unaccepted place—and did He not meet us there? He did not choose the pleasant places of peace: nor was His path other than one of purpose and design. There were no accidental meetings in His life. It was not by accident that we ever knew Him!

V.12. “There met Him ten men that were lepers.” The thought of *purpose* is conveyed in the use of the word “met” (apantao). In Matthew xxviii.9 the same word is used “Jesus met them saying, All hail.” But when Paul (Acts xvii.17) disputed “in the market daily with them that met with him” the word used (paratugchano) means “to meet by chance”. It

is clear that the meeting with the ten men was not just a happening but one of the many purposed occasions of the path of the Lord Jesus. "Ten men that were lepers which stood afar off." Again the sad situation was before Him. How often He was confronted with it! How often He endured! Here, in figure, is human responsibility shown in failure. Ten men—with the insignia of death upon them. Dressed in the clothes of mourning they were known as those upon whom was "the finger of God."

It is not without significance that we are told the number of this sad company. In the inspired Word of God consistent symbols are used so that the divine message may reach man notwithstanding his limitations. In whatever age, and by whichever hand the word is written, the numerical reference carries its same message of human responsibility. It is in the "ten words" of Exodus xx; David uses it in Psalm cxliv. Upon an "instrument of ten strings" the "sweet singer of Israel" acknowledges his responsibility to sing "a new song" to God Who had delivered him, and there is a string for each of his fingers in so doing! There are many such presentations of the same truth in the divine Word—it should be one of the clear proofs of divine inspiration to any serious reader.

The lepers stood afar off—in other such meetings we see Him bridging the distance and touching the poor man. The distance is a sad symbol of the sin condition of the nation, to be contrasted with His identification with them in their need. The distance, by common consent, was one hundred paces and from thence their cry was raised. It may have been a discordant cry from throats already sensing the approach of death—"Jesus, Master, have compassion on us"—but He Who heard it had listened for it! It is not the cry of formal appeal nor is it part of a religious ceremony—oft repeated. It has no place in temporary humility or passing sentiment. It is the heart cry of those who, in the face of death, *know* that they have no resource save in the mercy—the compassion of God. So does the cry reach Him from the distance of ostracism—had it been but a whisper of dying appeal He would have heard it.

V.14. "When He saw them"—there is a *personal* response

in His looking—there is reassurance in His voice. “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” But priests were not to be found in this despised Samaritan neighbourhood. Why take the journey till they knew they would be safe under ecclesiastical scrutiny? Here is the challenge to their faith in His response. Standing there they were lepers—“as they *went*—they were healed.” It needs but that turning step of faith to be conscious of submission to a Power, unknown before—to be aware that, where death had reigned, there is now newness of life.

### TESTIMONY TO THE PRIESTS

Once more the priests were to be confronted with irrefutable evidence of the presence of God in Christ. Their scrutiny was a compulsory duty under the law. Nine men, still wearing their garments of mourning would present themselves. The offerings prescribed would be laid before them in all their significant beauty and there could be but one outcome to their exhaustive examination—one answer to their questions. “Jesus, Master—mercy.” The One Who, while maintaining the order of the law, acted in the power of divine grace.

One cannot but think of the challenging testimony to the religious leaders of the Jews. In His words, indeed, but not in these alone, though “never man spake like this man” (John vii.46), but in deeds which proclaimed divine authority, causing consternation among His enemies, the challenge was inescapable. “What do we?” they said, “for this man doeth many miracles” (John xi.47). Here, most clear to human sight, was evidence of perfect cleansing—no disfiguring sign remained.

With hastening footsteps the nine leave the Source of blessing, intent upon resuming their association with the synagogue and rehabilitation with their kinsfolk. It is difficult to feel there was no sense of thankfulness in their hearts—but it was not *expressed*. They would be concerned with the ritual of their cleansing—the earthen vessel over running water—the clean bird that had to die—the one that would rise in flight with the sprinkled blood upon its wings—the hyssop of fragrant humility—the scarlet contrast of earthly grandeur and the beauty and stability of the cedar. One day, when Israel repents and the blemishes of national pride



are gone and the distortions of a rebellious spirit are no more, there will be holy gratitude and glory for God, for the time will have come when they shall say "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke xiii.35).

### A WORSHIPPER

Let us turn to the divine Worker of healing and find ourselves in company with a worshipper! Here is one who, "seeing that he was cured, turned back glorifying God with a loud voice and fell on his face at His feet giving Him thanks." Not for him were the forms and symbols, beautiful and significant though they were, indeed. He turned back to the Author of the voice that answered his appeal for mercy—he worshipped the divine Person while others were occupied with their new-found freedom from disfigurement and advancing death. It must have been an amazing experience for the poor stranger—this immediate awareness of life in a vigour and freshness he had never known. He heard the words, tinged with sorrow, "There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." It was gracious acknowledgment of his own worship, and there remained, for him alone, that word of personal uplift and assurance "Rise up and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." With every real believer, he had found God in Christ by faith. He could go—no longer defiled—not to the priests but in the freedom of grace upon the way in spiritual company with the One with Whom are linked for all time those of "like precious faith" (2 Peter i.1).

It had been a sad fellowship of suffering—the nine Jews with that one Samaritan. A fatal condition had made them a company of outcasts. What communications had passed between them? Were there plans, or hopes, of meeting this Jesus who was known to show mercy to the helpless? Dependent upon the charity of friends or relatives their movements would be restricted. There were now divergent paths. The nine had gone where ritual gave no glory to Christ. It was the "stranger"—the Gentile worshipper who gave glory to God.

V.17. "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine, where are they?" (JND). They could answer that they had obeyed

Him to the letter—but to give glory to God is a *voluntary* act. It is the outcome of a spiritual experience of God in grace. “The Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John iv.23). The Lord Jesus was far more sensitive that it is possible for us to know. If He were not intensely affected by every event in His life how could He be the Perfect Man—God manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. iii.16)? It mattered to *Him* that the nine lepers of Israel gave no glory to God. It was one of the multitude of sorrows that He knew.

There were few occasions when joy refreshed His spirit. Without doubt He received these from the hand of His Father with that submissive gratitude so beautiful to find in the divine record (Luke x.21). Was not this a moment of consolation also, and as such, precious to Him? It was *one* voice only—this heartfelt expression of glory to God in the Person of Christ—one man alone at the feet of Him Whose coming sacrifice would assure eternal life to all whose faith appealed to the mercy of God.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## “SCRIPTURE” and the “COMMON BIBLE”

We are accustomed to use the word “scripture”, understanding it as referring to any part of the Bible, but if we examine the so-called “Common Bible”, now appearing in bookshops, we shall find a number of books which are probably new to many of us, which are not found in our own Bibles. Are these books “scripture”, and if so, why have they not been included before? What exactly is implied by the word “scripture”?

To answer these questions, let us first examine the way in which our Lord and His apostles used the term. And here we must notice that there are two Greek words translated “scripture”. One of these is more often rendered “letter”; twice as “bill”; once as “writing”; once as “learning”; and only once as “scripture”. In this last instance it is qualified by the adjective “holy”. Paul writes to Timothy, “Of a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. iii.15). It is clear that Paul is here using a

common word, and giving it a special meaning by attaching the word "holy". Undoubtedly Timothy would have understood him to mean what we call the Old Testament.

Now the other Greek word occurs 51 times in the New Testament, and is *never* translated other than "scripture" or "scriptures". In that same letter to Timothy, in the next sentence, Paul states categorically that "all scripture is inspired 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 all good works."

If we examine the other 50 occurrences of the word, we shall be driven to the conclusion that the Lord Jesus, and the apostles, invariably attached to the word the same meaning that Paul does. "Inspired of God" is literally "God-breathed", and the fullest explanation can scarcely improve on this. We find that they quote the scriptures as unanswerable. For example, "Did ye never read in the scriptures?" (Matt. xxi.42); "The scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mk. xiv.49); "The scripture cannot be broken" (John x.35); "For what saith the scripture?" (Rom. iv.3); and "Shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts xviii.28).

Let us notice that no qualifying word such as "holy" is needed—"scripture" by itself is enough. Only once (Rom. i.2) is "holy" added. Of course, almost every reference to "scripture" is to the Old Testament, but there are exceptions, and the apostles do unhesitatingly refer to New Testament writings—then very new—in this way. Thus Paul couples together the Mosaic precept "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" with the New Testament statement "the labourer is worthy of his reward" under the phrase "the scripture saith" (I Tim. v.18).

Again, Peter says that some of Paul's epistles contained things hard to be understood "which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other scriptures*, to their own destruction (2 Peter iii.16). He also acknowledges that Paul in all his epistles had written according to the wisdom given to him. All Paul's epistles, then, are equally "scripture" and God-breathed, God-inspired. The statement sometimes made, that the apostles would never have dreamed of their

own writings being on a level with the ancient scriptures, is thus seen to be false. He claims inspiration for the words in which his teaching was conveyed, as well as for its substance (I Cor. ii.12,13).

### RECOGNITION OF INSPIRED WRITINGS

Another question now arises. How do we know whether any particular book is entitled to be called "scripture"? Some would, no doubt, like to have some earthly authority, some pope or church council, to pronounce a verdict, but no such "authority" can ever give us assurance. No, scripture is God's word, and comes to us with divine authority and bears the stamp of its divine origin, in exactly the same way as the oral messages of the prophets. Whether they used the phrase "Thus saith the Lord" or not, this was the import of what they spoke, and equally of what they wrote. The remarkable thing is, that the Jews, who had so often been disobedient to the prophets, yet came at length to *recognize* and preserve their writings as divine. It is these writings which the Lord Jesus and His apostles so often refer to as "scripture".

It is not known with any certainty how or when the collecting together of the Old Testament scriptures was finally completed, but though many other religious writings appeared among the Jews when the line of the prophets had ceased, none of them ever gained a place among the scriptures. Indeed, the best way to gain assurance for oneself as to the fundamental difference between inspired and non-inspired writings is to read some of this other literature—the so-called apocryphal books.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOCRYPHA

These writings vary greatly in quality. There are crude fables and legends which condemn themselves. There are sober accounts of the struggles of the Jews against their persecutors. There are books full of moral instruction which appear to be imitations of the book of Proverbs. But the best of them do not claim to give a divine message—indeed the wisdom they profess to teach is shallow and easily comprehensible—what man has compiled, man can understand! One

book asks its readers to pardon its errors. The well-known conciseness of scripture is replaced by a wordiness that is wearisome.

A famous passage in "Ecclesiasticus" (not to be confused with Ecclesiastes) begins "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us." Yes, that is how men speak, is it not? But God's word, if it praises men, praises them for the *faith* which counted upon God, as in Hebrews xi. For scripture, all through, is the record of God's dealings with men to bring them back to Himself.

The "Wisdom of Solomon" is plainly not the work of Solomon, as is shown by its quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah. But we repeat, the divine stamp is lacking in these writings.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, in a well-known passage, distinguishes very carefully between the scriptures and the apocrypha, declaring positively of the former that "no-one has been so bold as to add anything to them or to take anything from them, or to make any change in them." A far more important fact, which can easily be verified, is that **neither the Lord nor any of His apostles ever quotes from an apocryphal book.**

On the resurrection day, when the Lord appeared to His disciples in the upper room, He said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me." Now here He used a customary classification of the Hebrew scriptures: the Law, that is, the five books of Moses; the Prophets, among which the earlier historical books (Joshua to Kings) were included; the Psalms, a division which included the remaining books of the Old Testament, and usually known as the Hagiographia, or Holy Writings. The Psalms were placed first, and the Lord probably used this name for the whole division. This last conclusion is supported by the fact that the Hagiographia included Daniel—a book which the Lord pointedly referred to as scripture. Had the word "Psalms" meant only the book of Psalms, Daniel's prophecy would have been excluded. The Lord

then, quoted from all parts of the Old Testament, but never from the apocrypha.

### **ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

Although some use has been made of some of the apocryphal books for moral instruction, the same distinction has been generally maintained even during the darkest days of declension. But the Roman Catholic church, at the Council of Trent in 1546, went contrary to the teaching of its most learned "fathers" and added eleven of the apocryphal books to the scriptures, giving them the same authority as the scriptures. These books have been included in Roman Catholic bibles since that time. The Reformers, however, refused to acknowledge them as scripture.

We are now presented with a Protestant-Catholic compromise in what is called the "Common Bible". Protestants agree to the inclusion of the apocryphal books, and Catholics agree to use a Protestant translation of the Bible—the New English Bible. It would appear that Protestants have made by far the greater concession. All in the interests of unity. However, the N.E.B. translators by their frequent unfaithfulness in translation (see WORDS OF HELP, May 1962) betray their lack of reverence for the inspired Word of God, so that the inclusion of uninspired books is evidence of a similar attitude. We conclude that the Common Bible is best left alone.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

### **OUR WALK**

From the moment of our new birth we are responsible that our daily walk should be worthy of Him. The apostle's prayer for the Colossians was that they "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians i.10).

There are many difficulties. This is a day of declension, when the very foundations of all we hold precious are being undermined. Our crafty foe seeks to turn our eyes from our Lord and Master. In our everyday affairs, the world's pageantry, its martial music and brilliant displays, and even

things less attractive outwardly, will draw us from Christ, unless we are watchful.

Peter found it easy to look away from the Lord when he was on the Lake of Gennesaret. He was full of assurance as long as his eyes were where they should have been. When he looked away he found himself involved in danger and difficulties. How graciously the Lord revealed the weakness of His disciple—and met it! As Peter wrote at a later date, he learned the importance of the words, “Kept by the power of God” (I Peter i.5). Whilst we are looking off unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, we shall assuredly walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

We should be distrustful of our old nature, and say, like Jeremiah of old, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah x.23). Let us listen for His word behind us, “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah xxx.21).

The way of walking worthily may seem a narrow one, but it is God’s way; and the way whose end is life and glory we know must be right. True wisdom says, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” If our desire is to be “all pleasing” to Him in all our ways, we must follow the wise direction of the One Who is Himself the Way and the Truth and the Life.

But we are also to be fruitful in every good work. Fruitfulness is the direct result of vitality imparted from the source itself. Incessant attention to every detail of our walk is essential. Excessive energy at one period and relaxation at another will not produce the desired result. There must be continual watchfulness and dependence upon the Lord. He has set us apart for Himself, to be ready to every good work, rich in good works, and a pattern of them.

The blessing attached to fruitfulness is that of “increasing in the knowledge of God.” This knowledge is a treasure that cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir; its price is above rubies. Paul’s prayer for the saints was that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge  
*(Continued on inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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(Continued from inside back cover)

*faith* that is God's gift — it is neither *of ourselves*, nor *of works*. (The two parallel phrases must both refer to the same thing, which cannot be *faith*, as it would be superfluous to say that faith was not of works).

The point is, that *salvation* is a gift bestowed from above, to which neither we ourselves, nor our works, have contributed anything. It is *of grace*, i.e. proceeds from grace as its source; it is *through* faith, as the door into my soul through which the Saviour enters. The working of God's Spirit by which I am led to open the door is as mysterious and unknowable as the movement of the wind (John iii.8). I can't open the door myself, but neither does He force it open — it is still often sadly true that He must say, "I would . . . but ye would not" (Luke xiii.34). E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## GRACE TO FAILING SERVANTS

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, displayed in so many ways towards His people, is perhaps seen at its brightest in their days of weakness and failure. Let us consider some of these.

### **John the Baptist.** (Read Luke vii.18-28)

At a time when the great miracles of the Lord were arousing interest and excitement in Israel, but His preaching and calling for repentance evoked but little response, a deputation of John Baptist's disciples approached the Lord.

John himself, it will be remembered, after his introduction of Jesus to the nation of Israel, had willingly accepted a measure of obscurity, in order that the limelight might fall upon his Master. Yet he still continued his preaching of repentance, and went so far as to challenge King Herod for his unlawful marriage to his brother Philip's wife. For this he was imprisoned by Herod.

As the reports of the great miracles of Jesus were brought to him, John seems to have been perplexed as to why such mighty Messianic power should leave him, Messiah's herald, languishing in prison. Whether these were his thoughts or not we can only surmise, but certainly, in that dark dungeon, some doubt arose in his mind whether after all he had been mistaken in his testimony. Could it possibly be that Jesus was not the promised Messiah?

We need not wonder that a man who had repeatedly testified to great crowds about Jesus should now himself be assailed by doubts. It is such a human frailty. Like his great predecessor Elijah, he was "a man subject to like passions as we are". So he sent his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

For answer the Lord Jesus drew the men's attention to the fresh miracles He was even then performing, saying, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is

preached". For these were in very truth the signs which the prophets of old had foretold that Messiah would perform, and not least His preaching to the poor (e.g. Isaiah xxxv.5,6; lxi.1,2). Then Jesus added, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me".

Such was His answer — no rebuke, no chiding, but just a message of encouragement — of blessing for John, and also for his disciples, or any others who might wonder about John's fate — a blessing for everyone who remained steadfast in his faith in Jesus, whatever the outcome might be for the present. It is the more precious to us, because Jesus Himself had at that time every cause for discouragement. But His concern was not for Himself, but for His tried servant. Is it not a message of encouragement for any perplexed and discouraged servants of the Lord today?

Yet there is more. As John's messengers departed, the Lord turned to the crowd, who had overheard John's question, and He began to bring out the real worth of His forerunner. Could it have been a mere waverer that the crowds had gone out into the wilderness to see? Was it a man unused to hardship? Or was it indeed a prophet, like one of the old prophets they so much admired? Indeed he was, the Lord insisted, not merely a prophet, but the greatest prophet of all — the very herald of the Christ.

So John might falter in his witness to Jesus, but Jesus lavished honour on His servant John in the eyes of men.

Who would not delight to serve such a Master?

### **Paul (Read Acts xxiii.1-11)**

We need not enter into the controversy as to whether Paul's last visit to Jerusalem was right or not, in order to be convinced that the scene at the beginning of this chapter does not show us Paul at his best. His angry reply to the high priest Ananias, even if he were ignorant of his identity, contrasts painfully with that of the Lord Jesus in similar circumstances (John xviii.22-23). Likewise his effort to cause dissension in the council by setting Pharisees and Sadducees

at loggerheads he himself afterwards admitted to be wrong (Acts xxiv.20,21).

We may reasonably conclude, therefore, that the close of that day found Paul in very low spirits indeed. For not only had his visit to Jerusalem with gifts for the poor saints failed to win the Jews' approval (Acts xxiv.17), but before the council he had not shone for his Master. It was precisely at such a time as this that the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul with words of encouragement. "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

How unspeakably gracious! How well the Master knew His servant's heart! If there was one thing that Paul desired, it was to be able to testify to his Master. So, with no hint of rebuke or upbraiding, no mention of his failure, the Lord acknowledged how Paul had borne witness to His name. He could have reminded Paul that many years before He had warned him to get out of Jerusalem, "for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me". But no, He that will not break the bruised reed knew well what His servant needed just then, and that is what He supplied.

Then He adds something to buoy him up for the future. Paul had written of his intense desire to visit Rome (Romans i.10-15; xv.24,28), after going to Jerusalem, but what remained of that hope now? Well, the Lord now assures him that he should, after all, have his heart's desire — he should bear witness to his Lord at Rome. We know how this was fulfilled, but how Paul must have cherished the gracious promise in the dark days in between!

## **Peter**

A familiar story, this. There is no need to recount the details, as all are aware of how the foremost of the apostles denied his Lord three times. But perhaps we may point out that the cock-crowing was surely intended to remind Peter of the Lord's words, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me". Then, amid the mocking

from the high priest's servants, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter". No wonder Peter, remembering, went out, and wept bitterly.

If the failure here was greater than in the other cases, there was no difference in the love that restored, though more help was doubtless required.

First, the risen Lord's message by the angels to the women, "Go your way, tell His disciples *and* Peter" — what a delicate assurance to Peter that he had not, in spite of all, in his Lord's eyes at least, forfeited the name of "disciple"!

Next, the special appearance to Peter, of which no detail whatever is revealed to us (Luke xxiv.34; I Cor.xv.5). The whole church must hear of his denials, but the gracious healing words at that interview are Peter's own private joy. How perfectly the Master did all that He did!

Lastly, the Lord would restore Peter publicly in the esteem of his fellow-disciples. The scene at the Galilean lakeside (John xxi) shows us how the Lord by His repeated question "Lovest thou Me?" gave Peter the opportunity of a threefold affirmation of his love in answer to his threefold denial. Yet how could it but remind him of how previously his love had failed at the crucial point?

It is instructive to note the variation of words here, which is not easily reproduced in English. To the question "Lovest thou Me?" Peter protests, "Lord, *Thou* knowest that I have affection for Thee". So again the second time. But the third time the Lord uses Peter's word "Hast thou affection for Me?" At this Peter was grieved, for the Lord probed deeply — he had not shown love, let alone affection; yet he was assured that the Lord knew his inmost feelings, so he answered, "Lord, *Thou* knowest all things, *Thou* knowest that I have affection for Thee".

Did the Lord accept Peter's protestations? Surely He did, and as proof He responded to each with a public charge — "Feed My lambs — shepherd My sheep — feed My sheep". Those for whom the Good Shepherd had laid down His life were committed to the care of a servant who had failed — could His restoring grace go further?

Yet He went further still. He revealed to him that his earlier claim "I will lay down my life for Thy sake" should after all be proved true. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not". Not only should he go, like his Master, to prison and to death, but *his* death, too, should be the death of the cross.

Such grace as this may well lead the servant to feel how unworthy he is of such a Master, but it should encourage us to serve more diligently. Let us take to ourselves His last words to Peter — "Follow thou Me".

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## THE PEOPLE OF GOD

### BELIEVERS

THE PEOPLE OF GOD are variously described in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, titles such as "saints", "children of God", "believers", the "redeemed", "sons of God", come readily to mind. Yet, because we accept that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable . . . for instruction in righteousness", (2 Timothy iii.16), it follows that there is valuable teaching to be found in the titles given to them.

The name "believers" is one that is colloquially, and conventionally, given to the people of God, although in the Scriptures it appears to be simply descriptive of them, rather than a title given to them by God.

The word occurs but twice in our Authorised Version. *And believers were the more added to the Lord . . .* (Acts v.14). *Be thou an example of the believers* (1 Timothy iv.12). In the second passage it is doubtful whether our word "believers" is the best translation from the original Greek, as a glance at some other translations will show. However, apart from this consideration, it is quite certain that the word "believers" signifies a distinguishing characteristic of all

God's adopted children; as do the equivalent expressions, "those that believe" (1 Timothy iv.10), "whosoever believeth" (John iii.16) "after that ye believed" (Ephesians i.13), and many others.

### **An Essential Characteristic**

Called by His grace, the people of God are a *believing people*. This is an essential and vital characteristic, for we read, "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews xi.6). From this passage we discover that *having faith* and *believing* are synonymous terms, the Greek words for "faith" and "believe" having the same root.

In the letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul describes himself and his readers as those "who believe" (chapter i.19) and then further on in the letter he writes, "by grace are ye saved through faith" (chapter ii.8). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it this way, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; *but of them that believe to the saving of the soul*" (chapter x.38,39). This quotation implies that all profession of belief, or faith, is not saving faith. James in his Epistle writes of a barren, fruitless faith, not evidenced by the outward life. He describes it as the sort of faith that devils possess. Yet they are still devils. He goes on further to declare that it is a dead faith which cannot save.

There are many today who profess to believe that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah and Saviour; but they have never believed in Him for a personal salvation. Multitudes accept Christianity as a form of religion, but remain as adherents to a system and nothing more. How many there are who will assent to the truths contained in the historic creeds of the Church, and even to Scriptural truth, as an intellectual conviction, while the evidence of their being "born of the Spirit" is sadly lacking.

To "believe to the saving of the soul", is to believe the



record which God Himself has given of His Son. That is "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v.11-12). It is as simple as that. To believe is to receive the Gospel; to believe the good tidings of the forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus Christ; to trust in, and to depend on Him, in all the fullness and perfection of His finished work as the Saviour of sinners.

We may express it perhaps in another way. This faith is a sure trust in the mercy of God as shown to us in Jesus Christ. It is a confidence in a pardoning God; the conviction that the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me, and that I am reconciled to God the Father by the blood of His Cross.

Thy mercy found us in our sins,  
 And gave us to believe;  
 Then, in believing, peace we found,  
 And in Thy Christ we live.

### **All of Grace**

Now no one is a believer in this way apart from the grace of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians ii.14). This is continually apparent to those who are spiritually enlightened. The man of the world may be wise and understanding in the things of this world; but he is blind to the things of the Spirit until he is "born of the Spirit". The Apostle Paul makes this the basis of his prayer for his readers in Ephesus. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened . . . ." (chapter i.17,18).

So it is that the people of God are a "believing people". They can say with the voice of assurance, "I know whom

I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy i.12); knowing that in "that day" of judgment "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans ix.33).

T. D. SPICER

## THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATION

*"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"*

If there were spiritual beings — angels — created before this, as Job xxxviii.7 seems to indicate, this fact is not really our concern — the "beginning" is when the visible creation first appeared. We may take it as an axiom that the Creator cannot be known by His creatures unless He reveals Himself, but we cannot accept what some claim, that He is unknowable — this would be tantamount to saying He *could* not reveal Himself, which is absurd. Richard Wurmbrand, when told by his communist persecutors that the Russian astronauts had seen no sign of God, replied "An ant might crawl round Wurmbrand's boot, and say he had seen no sign of Wurmbrand".

Those who affect to believe that the universe produced itself out of nothing could hardly expect to see more of God in space than they could see on the earth. It is like a blind man denying the existence of the moon! But the tacit assumption that the Creator must be visible as the creation is visible brings us to the point we wish to make, that between God and His creation there is a fundamental distinction not always appreciated — a gulf infinitely greater than between a man and *his* handiwork. For a man and his handiwork are both part of God's creation, and this is true even when we consider an immaterial production, such as a poem, or a musical composition. The thoughts expressed are the thoughts of a created being, expressed in terms of created things. But God is utterly different from His creation. Herein is the folly of idolatry.

When asked by Moses what he should tell the Israelites was the name of their God, Jehovah answered, "I AM WHAT

I AM". This does not mean that He refused to give information about Himself, but that there was nothing at all that He could be compared to. Hence the question "What is God like?" is unanswerable.

Adherents of false religious systems (Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, etc.) argue that if Jesus is God's Son, He cannot be God. But this is merely because it would not be so among men, as though God were just like man. Yet it is true, as Genesis teaches us, that man was made in God's likeness. That is, God has reproduced some of His own characteristics in man. Thus man is a moral being, as God is, but as the lower animals are not. We may conclude also that as man is personal, so is God—that He is not just an impersonal "life-force". But what we must not conclude is that His personality is just like man's, and the New Testament reveals that God is not a single person, but three Persons — Father, Son and Spirit. At the same time it maintains the same characteristic truth that the Old Testament insists on, that God is One. One divine Essence, but three Persons. Perhaps some may feel that the word "person" is inadequate, and this may be admitted. But it is the best word we have. It certainly will not do to say, as sometimes is said, that there are three divine manifestations of the One God. But to object to the doctrine of the Trinity because it is beyond human understanding is once more to forget the difference between Creator and creation. And while the human mind can reason that there *can* be but one true God, no human mind conceived of the Trinity. Yet, when it is revealed to us, we can understand that if God is love (as scripture declares He is) He could not be a single person.

Throughout the Bible God reveals Himself as a personal God. He always uses personal terms in which to speak of Himself — He is a father (Mal.i.6); He is a husband to Israel (Hosea ii.16; Isaiah L.1.; liv. 5); He is a king, a warrior, a husbandman (i.e. farmer); a shepherd. He comforts as a mother does her children. Coming down in His grace to the level of our understanding He tells us of His anger, His jealousy, His pity and His repenting, and all these are per-

sonal feelings. Only a few impersonal figures are ever used of God, and then with a special purpose. He fills heaven and earth (I Kings viii.27; Jer. xxiii.24)—a statement which forbids any thought of *limitation*. He is the fountain of living waters (Jer. ii.13) — the very source and sustainer of life. He is a consuming fire (Heb. xii.29) — but this is how the wicked will know Him.

But of course, the crowning revelation of God was Christ Jesus — “Who is the image of the invisible God” (Col. i.15). All the revelations of the Old Testament find their completion in Him.

The bible emphasizes the changelessness of God: change is characteristic of created things. Even the “everlasting hills” are changing continually, though now but slowly. The time is coming when created things will suffer a much greater change, or will even pass away entirely, but God is ever the same. “Of old Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end” (Psalm cii.25-27). This scripture is applied in Heb. i. to the Lord Jesus, showing that He is indeed God. As another verse in Hebrews declares, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and for ever”. What a consolation it is to know that our trust is in One Who will never alter — His love and care for us will never diminish!

In created things, any relative changelessness is a mark of the absence of life, and is also associated with hardness and lack of feeling — we speak of being stony-hearted. Not so with our Creator. His changelessness is pictured indeed by the “Rock of Ages”, where it is a question of the foundations of our faith, but also by the fire in the burning bush that Moses saw — a symbol of intense energy. The bush was not burnt up, and the fire did not die down, because *that* fire needed no fuel. Nothing sustains the life of God — He is self-existent, and is Himself the sustainer of all created life, and indeed of the creation itself (Col. i.17).

Again, to suppose that His changelessness means hardness and lack of feeling shows how man's reasoning is coloured by his own hardheartedness. Who, indeed, could suspect the tenderness and compassion, the patience and longsuffering in the heart of God? Shown at all times in His dealings with men that trusted Him, it was brought out in all its fullness in the life of Jesus.

Human philosophy has often pictured God as remote from man and inaccessible to him. Paul rebuked this error when speaking to the Areopagus (Acts xvii.27,28), saying "He is not far from everyone of us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being". The Bible shows Him as listening to the cry of the poor (Ps. xxxiv.6). He sees the affliction of the slave girl (Gen. xvi.11). When it says "He dwells in light which no man can approach unto" it means that no man can comprehend Him, and sinful man is utterly unable to endure His presence. However, through the Lord Jesus the believer can approach Him in spirit, as we are exhorted to do.

Scripture tells us that man is able to learn about God's eternal power and divinity by the contemplation of created things (Rom. i.20), and in fact many heathen nations have had a half-forgotten belief in a supreme God, great in power and goodness, but have in practice worshipped and prayed to a number of lesser gods. This shows man's ineradicable tendency to idolatry — we see the same thing in Romanism, where people believe in the Almighty God, but prefer to pray to and trust in a multitude of saints, as being more accessible!

It is possible to argue that if man is God's highest creature — as far as natural knowledge goes — then the best men must be those most like God, and so to reason from this that God must be good and wise, loving and forgiving, as well as of unlimited power. Some few men have thus reasoned apart from revelation. But no reasoner has ever imagined the truth of God's redeeming love — of God Himself becoming man and dying to put away sin, in order to bring man back to Himself.

## THE INCARNATION

In the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ the unimaginable gulf between the Creator and the creation has been crossed — but from the divine side. There was no possibility of crossing it from man's side. That the Creator — the divine Son — should partake of flesh and blood is a mystery which we can never understand. That the Infinite One — Who fills heaven and earth, should confine Himself, at least as far as His activity among men was concerned — to a human body, passes our comprehension. Hence in speaking of it we must confine ourselves to what is revealed in scripture, for human reasoning is completely baffled.

We are told that He Who was in the form of God emptied Himself (Phil. ii.7), and took upon Him the form of a servant, or bondman. This was His own act, as befits One Who is God over all, blessed for ever: the One accustomed to command took upon Him a bondman's form.

What exactly does the emptying imply? Taking it with the preceding and following verses we may say it implies a relinquishing of His supreme authority, as one with the Father and the Spirit, so as to take a subject place. This accords with His frequent statements, as recorded especially in John's Gospel, that He spoke and acted as His Father directed, and never on His own. His works also were performed by the Father's power (through the Spirit), and in communion with the Father (John xiv.10; Acts x.38; Matt. xii.28). He refused to act miraculously on His own behalf, when Satan tempted Him to make stones into bread. Having taken a place in God's creation as man, He was in every way perfect man — perfect in dependence and obedience to God and to His word, submissive even in suffering and contumely to the Father's will, unto the death of the cross.

Then the very life which He had as man was dependent life — "made like unto His brethren". Deprived of food, He hungered; deprived of rest. He was weary, for He had not taken some miraculous life that could dispense with these things. Of course when He fasted in the wilderness

He was divinely sustained, though not spared the suffering, for He was giving proof of the scripture that man does not live by bread alone. Yet we must insist that He was not mortal, though one new translation adds this word to Phil. ii. For "mortal" means liable to death, and this is the wages of sin. Even upon the cross no-one could take His life from Him, but He laid it down of Himself (John x.18).

We ought not to view the Incarnation merely as a means of saving fallen man, for who can tell what other purposes of God it has made possible? We know that it has provided the Lord Jesus with a companion for His glory — the Church which is His bride. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, which His incarnation made possible, God has brought men nearer to Himself than mere creation could — He has made them His children — a nearness of which the real meaning will only be known in eternity.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## IS FAITH THE GIFT OF GOD?

Nothing that is good in us is there except by God's working, and in that sense faith is His gift. So also is repentance, as Peter declared, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v.31). But no-one can say he has no faith because God has not given him it, for God's Spirit works in men to bring them to repentance and faith, while men resist Him just as they did in Noah's day (Genesis vi.3).

However, Ephesians ii.8 is often misunderstood. Paul writes:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Now the word *that* in this sentence is often referred back to the last word only of the preceding clause, i.e. to *faith*, instead of to the whole clause. It is *salvation by grace through*

*(Continued on inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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Vol. LXI

OCTOBER 1973

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

God. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" asked His adversaries (Mk. ii.7).

**He claimed complete knowledge of all that God did, and full participation in it.**

We need only quote the scripture. "The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all that He himself is doing" (John v.19, R.S.V.).

**He claimed unity with the Father.**

"I and My Father are one" (John x.30).

**The Father is completely revealed in Him.**

"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv.9).

We have only to contrast with these claims the completely contrary attitude of all other servants of God, to see that here is a challenge we cannot ignore. Moses, David, Isaiah, Peter, Paul — one and all disclaim any sort of eminence for themselves — but they were *men*. He who claimed such things as these for Himself was either God — or a deceiver. There is no alternative. The notion that He was just mistaken does not hold water.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

*(to be continued, D.V.)*

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### Correction

On page 96 (August issue) it was wrongly stated that the "Common Bible" contains the "New English Bible" translation. Actually it has the Revised Standard Version. We regret this mistake. The remark made as to frequent unfaithfulness in translation does not apply, in the writer's judgment, to the R.S.V. However, the main point of the article, which was to protest against the inclusion of uninspired books, remains unaffected.

E.H.C.

## THE PEOPLE OF GOD

### SAINTS

The name in most frequent use for the followers of Christianity is that of "Christians". We must remember, however, that initially this is the name that was given them by their enemies, "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts xi.26). It would seem that the men of Antioch were given to nick-naming people. On a more formal note the Roman historian Tacitus wrote, "Nero . . . punished . . . a class . . . who are commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hand of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius." So we discover the title "Christian" is not one of God's names for His people, as is "Children of God", or "Saints"; but a title given by men and now, alas, commonly used to designate adherents of Christianity generally.

Although the name "Christian" is found only three times in Scripture (Acts xi.26; xxvi.28; 1 Peter iv.16), the name "saints" is used frequently and this seems to have been the common title for New Testament believers. It was in very early use for we find Ananias saying of Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem" (Acts ix.13; see also verses 32 and 41).

### The saints at . . .

The Greek word translated "saints" means separated from common use, dedicated, hallowed, or the holy ones. The basic idea is separation; separated from the world and separated to God. In the New Testament, the title is applied to all believers and is a synonym for a brother in Christ. It is not used in the singular and nowhere in Scripture do we read of "Saint So and So". The saints are demonstrated in Scripture as those constituting the church in a particular locality; so Paul writes to "the saints which are at Ephesus" (Eph. i.1) and of the "saints . . . of Caesar's household" (Phil. iv.22). They are shown to include Gentile as well as Jewish believers, and indeed are all who have been "made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . and have access by one Spirit unto the Father . . . fellow-citizens with the saints" (Eph. ii.13,18,19).

### **Glorified in His Saints**

This title for the people of God also has reference to the hope of their calling, for as God's faithful people they are to be manifested as those who are in Christ "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (I Thess.iii.13). At the end time the heavenly Bridegroom will be glorified in His saints and admired in all those who have believed (2 Thess. i.10). Then the saints will be associated with Christ in the final judgment, including that of the angels (1 Cor. vi.2,3).

### **The Worship of Saints**

The use of the term "saints" for individuals of outstanding sanctity, and their "canonization", as practised by the Church of Rome, is quite unscriptural. The worship of saints and angels is directly forbidden in Scripture, and we have on record the specific refusals of Peter and Paul, as well as of an angel, to accept it — "See thou do it not" (Rev.xix.10; see also Acts x.25 and xiv.14). Such practices cannot but contradict the teaching that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men (1 Tim.ii.5) and are, therefore, to be firmly rejected. Every believer has the privilege of, and may enjoy, direct access to the Father on account of the finished work of Christ. Saints are those who are true believers; that is, those who are chosen of the Father, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and called by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. They need no "canonization" at the hands of men to validate their title.

But how is it that such a name can be given to those who are daily conscious of their failure and sin, and mourn over it? It cannot be because of any degree of personal holiness, but rather because of their relationship to Him Who has called them and sanctified them in Christ (1 Cor.i.2). It is not on account of their walk and conduct in this life, but because of their standing in Christ, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i.30). When the apostle writes to Corinth of the impossibility of notorious sinners entering the kingdom of God he says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the

name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi.11).

### **As becometh saints**

Although saints are so called because of their standing in Christ, and not because of their conduct, it follows that having this distinctive name their conduct ought to correspond to it. So it is that on two occasions we find the expression "as becometh saints" (Rom. xvi.2; Eph. v.3). It is for this reason that the precepts and exhortations of the New Testament are given. Paul was constantly urging his readers to "walk worthy" (Eph. iv.1; 1 Thess. ii.12). There is also in the use of the term the thought of faithfulness (Col. i.2) and that such a relationship to God involves conforming to His will and character (Eph. v.3).

May the Lord's people have grace to adorn that "worthy name by which ye are called" (James ii.7). T. D. SPICER

## **QUOTATIONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW MORE QUOTATIONS CUT SHORT**

The Lord's use of Isaiah lxi. in the synagogue at Nazareth is a beautiful example of His unerring skill in wielding the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, using only that which fitted His purpose. In the epistles of Paul and Peter, men guided by the Spirit, we see the same principle of rightly dividing the word of truth, especially in leaving out that which has a prophetic rather than a present bearing.

### **PROPHETIC CHARACTER OF SOME PSALMS**

The Book of Psalms, while giving us the heart-exercises of the writers, does express at the same time principles of permanent and universal application. Yet it also has a prophetic aspect. It reveals the feelings of the godly Jewish remnant in the coming "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx.7). In that day, when the unbridled self-will of rebellious human hearts will rise to unheard-of heights, God will raise up for Himself these witnesses, not marked in general by great spiritual light, but by uncompromising moral integrity, as

expressed figuratively in Rev. xiv.5: "And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are blameless" (JND). The day of grace will be over; these saints will feel in their souls the terrors of the broken law, and in the Psalms give us, time and again, their confessions of sin coupled with cries for deliverance based on the saint's godly walk. Some will evidently have more spiritual intelligence than the rest: they are called the "maschilim" (wise or instructed ones), and they will perhaps use the "Maschil" psalms in particular to instruct others in God's ways. But, ignorant or not, once the Man of sin is revealed and the abomination of desolation is set up, this remnant will be characterized by faithfulness to God at all costs: many will seal their witness with their blood.

### QUOTATIONS FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Two quotations from Romans illustrate this.

In chapter iv.7-8 Paul quotes from Psalm xxxii.1-2, where David describes the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, the psalmist adds, "and in whose spirit there is no guile". Why does Paul omit the final words? It seems to be because in this section of Romans Paul is unfolding the righteousness of God in justifying the ungodly, and we can see that it would be out of place at this point to bring in the moral effects of known forgiveness and justification.

In Rom. x.6-8 Paul quotes Deut. xxx.12-14, concerning the accessibility of God's commands, but whereas Moses goes on to say "that thou mayest hear it and *do* it" Paul omits this and says instead: "the word of faith which we preach". Here again we find the sharp contrast between God's dealings in the past with His earthly people and His present ways in grace. The law of commandments in ordinances was an external code, and was more concerned with *outward action*, even though the mouth and heart were involved, whereas in the gospel everything hinges on Christ being trusted with the heart, and then being confessed with the lips. But the *nearness* and *accessibility* of the gospel enabled

Paul to employ the selfsame words with regard to it as Moses had used in respect of the law.

As regards Israel under the legal covenant, we know from the historical books and the prophets how completely they failed to keep it; but Moses' words "that thou mayest do it" have to some extent a future bearing, in that when God brings in His new, unconditional covenant, Israel (as represented by the remnant) will indeed have the law written in their hearts, so that "doing" the commandment will be the glad, spontaneous result of this, instead of being reluctant, external obedience or self-righteous pharisaism. It goes without saying that faith in the Person of Christ and His finished work will be the basis for blessing even as it is now.

It is true that all down the christian centuries — in spite of the full New Testament revelation — where the spiritual climate has been legal and full deliverance from sin has been unknown, the experiences of saints have been very similar to those of the remnant. Thus the late J. N. Darby has left it on record that for seven years he practically lived in Psalm lxxxviii, the only ray of hope for him being the opening words: "O Lord God of my salvation".

### A QUOTATION OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

In 1 Cor. ii.9 Paul quotes from Isaiah lxiv. 4: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him;" but whereas the prophet cries out for God to show His hand in delivering power on behalf of His earthly people, the apostle is able to say instead: "But God *has* revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." As another has pointed out: "The passage is often quoted to show that the things are so great one cannot know them. Whereas it is a quotation from Isaiah to show that what could not *then* be known (when the evil was there, and man was dealt with according to what he was in himself) is now revealed, now that man is in the glory in the Person of Christ, and the Holy Ghost has come down to show us what is there. Christianity is not Judaism."

The hasty inference from the passage in question is rather similar to the use that has so often been made of Deut. xxix.29: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed ones are ours and our children's for ever, to do all the words of the law." David, in Psalm cxxxi., says he would not exercise himself in great matters, or in things too wonderful for him, and Moses' words have been taken as urging a like spirit. But what he means here by "the revealed things" is the law, and Israel's responsibility to keep it; while "the secret things" are what God will do when that people, having utterly failed in their responsible position, are suffering the consequences of their disobedience and find themselves in circumstances which make a literal keeping of the law's ordinances impossible. God has reserves of grace which He will "bring out of His treasures" when His earthly people have come to an end of their resources. And this in fact is implied in the very next verses (Deut. xxx) as well as in the great song of chap. xxxii (verses 36 and 43).

Returning to 1 Cor. ii., the Holy Spirit has come down to lead saints into all truth, and with such a glorious fullness of revelation that the limiting factor is the capacity of the earthen vessels to contain it, or sometimes of the carnal mind engrossed with fleshly things, or the spiritual immaturity that cannot take in God's purposes. As for the natural man, the things of the Spirit are simply foolishness unto him.

May we be encouraged to make our own what the Spirit is ready to reveal to us. Wherever there is the desire to do God's will, He will reward purpose of heart with an ever-growing acquaintance with Himself, and an increasing understanding of the counsels of His all-various wisdom both for the present and the future. Always Christ's glory is both the immediate and the ultimate purpose, and our blessing is indissolubly linked with it.

A. C. McCANN

## DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES

"Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required



of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation" (Luke xi.50,51; similarly Matt. xxiii.35,36).

With this we may compare:—

"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." (Exodus xx.5).

The difficulty here is the *righteousness* of calling "this generation" to account for the blood of all the prophets, and similarly the children for the iniquity of their fathers.

The explanation is really a very simple one, and will perhaps be clearer if we take the Exodus scripture first. This is often misunderstood because the important phrase "of them that hate Me" is forgotten. It is also important to see that it is spoken to people in covenant relationship to God, who knew (or ought to have known) the will of God expressed in His word. Thus a son would have every opportunity, as he grew up, of seeing and feeling the opposition between his father's wicked ways and the word of God. Thus if he chose to follow his father, he was condoning his father's sins and adding his own, thus incurring his father's guilt as well as his own. He showed himself to be one of the haters of God.

The opposite case is dealt with in Ezek. xviii., and verse 14 says "Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like . . . he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live" (verse 17). A perfect illustration of this is the case of Ahaz, one of the most idolatrous of Judah's kings, contrasted with his son Hezekiah who, in the first month of his reign, began to restore the pure worship of Jehovah (2 Chron. xxix.3).

The words of Exodus seem to have no reference, however, to the many cases where a parent's follies bring suffering in the natural course of events upon his children. For cases where the innocent suffer are not confined to parents and children, neither does such suffering fall especially upon the haters of God.

Now to consider the words of the Lord Jesus in Luke xi. The same principle applies, with some extra features.

The scribes and Pharisees condemned, in words, their forefathers' rejection and persecution of the prophets, but in reality were following in their footsteps by their rejection of Christ. They would seal their opposition to the truth by persecuting also Christ's apostles and prophets, of whom Stephen was one. He said "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye". They sought to gain credit for themselves by embellishing the prophets' tombs, while paying no heed to their teaching. Only dead prophets interested them, as the Lord said, "Your fathers killed them, and ye build up their sepulchres".

Following thus their fathers' example, they would incur their fathers' guilt, adding it to their own. The claims of Christ interfered with their selfish, worldly ways, as the prophets' teaching had done with their fathers'.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## GOD INCARNATE

Last month we examined the subject of the essential distinction between the Creator and the creation, and thought of Him Who crossed that gulf in order to bring salvation to man. His appearance as a man in this world, born (though not conceived) as all other men are born, has inevitably allowed many to question or deny His deity.

Heretical sects multiply, and their creeds agree on nothing but this denial. Also there are many people who profess a greater or less degree of interest in Jesus, but seldom go so far as to believe Him to be God. For these reasons it will be helpful, we trust, to rehearse once again a few of the many proofs which the Bible affords as to this. And for any who reject the Bible itself, it may be remarked that *all* our knowledge of Jesus comes from the Bible.

There are many "texts" which, to the believer, establish the deity of Christ very definitely. But the heart of unbelieving man is so perverse that he makes unceasing efforts to find some ambiguity in such scriptures. For this reason we shall not base our arguments solely on such proofs, but

this must not be taken as implying any doubt about their testimony.

### A FALSE PICTURE SHOWN TO BE SO

Seeing that no-one can deny the honour constantly accorded to Jesus in the Scriptures, some alternative explanation of this has to be found by those who deny His godhead. It has usually taken the form, by those who profess subjection to the Bible as God's word, of teaching that Jesus was the first and noblest of created beings, indeed far above all others. They then go on to allow that God used Him to create all other creatures. This is the meaning, they claim, of the scriptures "God, Who created all things by Christ Jesus" (Eph. iii.9) and of the title of Jesus in Rev. iii.14 "the beginning of the creation of God".

As to the first, this scripture contains no hint whatever that Christ Jesus was Himself a creature. And as to the second, the significance of the words "of God" has been overlooked. A similar force is found in the expression "paradise of God" (Rev. ii.7), and in "Israel of God" (Gal. vi.16). In all these we have, not the old thing which sin had ruined, but that which is renewed according to God's thoughts.

Accordingly, "the creation of God" does not mean the original creation, now fallen under the bondage of corruption, but the New Creation, of which the Lord Jesus, by virtue of His resurrection, is the Beginning and Head. Thus it in no way implies that He is a creature.

Are there any *positive* proofs that He was not created? Certainly there are. Both in John i.3 and Col. i.16 it is said that all things were created by Him, and John adds that "without Him was not anything made that was made". How then can He Himself have been made? And lest anyone should think that all things applies only to the visible creation, Paul expressly includes the invisible, spiritual beings — all of them.

Another proof lies in the verbs employed. The Greek word for "was made" literally means "became", or "came into being". It is used of created things, while of the WORD

Himself in John i.1,2 it is repeatedly said that He "was". Similarly 1 John i.1 says "That which *was* from the beginning". The word "became" is not used of Him, except in reference to His *becoming* man, in Gal. iv.4. We have exactly the same distinction in John viii.58, and the same two verbs employed, when Jesus says to the Jews "Before Abraham *came into being*, I *am*". Had He said "I was", it might have meant mere pre-existence, because used thus in reference to *time*, as shown by the word "before", it would not have the absolute, timeless force that it has in John i.1. But the Lord did not say "I was" — He said "I AM". This expression can *only* mean timelessness, self-existence. He was claiming to be Jehovah, Who had said to Moses, "Tell the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you". The Jews recognised the claim at once, and took up stones to stone Him.

Likewise, as we mentioned in last month's article, the epistle to the Hebrews applies to Jesus the words of Psalm cii., where unchangeableness is ascribed to Jehovah in contrast to the decay of creation. The word Lord in this psalm of course corresponds to the Hebrew "Jehovah".

## JESUS ALWAYS ACCEPTED WORSHIP

An important fact to notice is during His sojourn on earth the Lord *never* rebuked those who fell down before Him in worship or homage, but always accepted such tributes, and indeed praised them. It matters not whether in translating we use the word "worship" or "do homage" — the fact stands out that the Lord's action provides a striking contrast to that of either men or angels. Peter corrected Cornelius when he fell at his feet (Acts x.25); Paul and Barnabas corrected the men of Lystra (Acts xiv.14-18); the angel corrected and indeed warned John (Rev. xxii.8,9). And finally, when Thomas exclaimed, as the risen Lord appeared before Him, "My Lord, and my God", there was no rebuke, but rather a blessing, at any rate for those who should thus believe *without* seeing.

With this we may also consider the ascriptions of praise and worship to the Lord Jesus in the Scriptures. In 1 Peter

iv.11 we read "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen". Some may possibly query whether the ascription of praise does not refer back to "God", though this would be a forced construction. No such objection, however, can arise in regard to Rev. i.5,6, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with clouds, etc."

**If we have grasped the truth of the gulf separating Creator and creature, we shall appreciate fully the force of these considerations.** It is because "Jehovah's Witnesses" and others have such a low idea of God that they do not understand the Bible's witness to the deity of the Lord. For were Jesus the most exalted of God's creatures, He would be infinitely below God. Impossible that worship should be permitted to Him then! The first and second of the Ten Commandments forbid it. So again does Jehovah in Isaiah xlii.8, "I am Jehovah: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another". If then the Scriptures ascribe glory to Jesus, it is proof that He is not "another", but very God. Before Jehovah Isaiah sees the seraphim veil their faces as they proclaim "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts", and in chapter xii. of his gospel John tells us that the glory of Jehovah which the prophet describes was the glory of the Son of God before His incarnation. That was no glory conferred on Him, but what belonged to Him essentially.

Again, it is impossible that a mere creature could be the source of grace and blessing to man, as Jesus is. Again and again we read, "Grace to you, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". Nor is the Lord Jesus invariably put second, for in 2 Cor. xiii.14 it is "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost".

### **SHARING THE DIVINE THRONE**

If Jesus were so infinitely below God, how could He possibly share the divine throne? No created being, however exalted, could sit there. There is no need to multiply scrip-

tures, which are well known, but we may mention Psalm cx. where Jehovah says, "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool", and Rev. xxii.1, "the throne of God and the Lamb". To His accusers Jesus said plainly "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke xxii.69), so applying the Psalm to Himself. The high priest at once proclaimed this as blasphemy.

In John xvii.5 the Son of God in His prayer asks "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was". That is to say, having now become incarnate, He asks to be restored to the place which He formerly had on the divine throne. In case anyone does not appreciate the distinction, we may be allowed to point out that in the promise to the overcomer in Laodicea to sit with Christ on His throne, this is the seat of His power as the promised King, a power which He exerts as *man*. It is not the divine throne. Significantly He follows the promise with the words "even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in *His* throne". *This* is the divine throne, where our Lord now is, and the believer is never promised that he should ever share it.

### HE BECAME A SERVANT

Though referred to last month, it will not be amiss to refer again to Phil. ii.6,7: "Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation (or, emptied Himself), and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Of course, "in the form of God" itself implies deity, but the point we now wish to make is that the taking the form of a servant was His own voluntary act. It is the whole point of the passage. He *became* a servant — of God, of course. Now every creature, even Michael the archangel, is that by his creation. He is bound to obey God's will, or else be a rebel like Satan. But the Son of God entered into that condition of subjection voluntarily. Here is proof again that He was no creature.

Moreover no angel can leave his appointed condition of his own volition — doing this was the sin mentioned in Jude 6. But He Who was God voluntarily became man — He could not of course cease to be God. Thus He was truly the only one Who could have been our Saviour. To pursue this point a little further, we see that God could not have *required* of any mere creature that he should suffer for the sins of others — such an atonement would have been valueless, not being voluntary. And no angel, even had he the desire, could have become man, as we have seen already. But He Who was over all was able to humble Himself, and freely undertake the whole wonderful work of redemption.

### **MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART**

Let us now turn to another remarkable feature about our Saviour. He spoke of Himself as meek and lowly in heart, and who, having studied the Scripture record, will question the simple truth of this? He reacted strongly against those who defiled His Father's house, and against the leaders of the people who led them astray, but when He Himself was maligned and ill-treated He protested quietly, and left all in the Father's hands. Yet along with this lowliness we find the most astounding claims regarding Himself — astounding, that is, if they were not the simple truth. Let us review some of these claims.

**He claimed to be able to lift the burdens of all who came to Him.**

We love the gracious words which express this, but perhaps do not stay to think of what a stupendous assertion it is: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When we consider mankind, and its burdens, we see that only God can lift them — our Incarnate God.

**He claimed the power to forgive sins.**

Seeing that all sin is against God, even when man is also involved, this clearly implies an assertion of oneness with

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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Vol. LXI

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No. 11

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

us, let us search ourselves in His presence, until we can say whole-heartedly, "Not my will, but Thine, be done". It is far more blessed for us to be able to say this, than to have the richest temporal blessing.

Should we desire "the power to get wealth"? No, that was right enough for a Jew, called to inherit earthly blessings and promises (verse 18), but our calling is much higher. We are blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in *heavenly* places, in *Christ*, and as to this world's good, the word says "Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Rather, our desire should be, like that of the apostle Paul who said, "that I may win Christ", and "that I may know Him". We know what trials the apostle passed through, and he was even then in prison, but in the midst of them all, having *that* Object before him, he could say, as to all else, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content".

May God give us, having Christ before our eyes, to accept gratefully whatever He may order as to our circumstances, knowing that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who the called according to His purpose". And what could be more blessed for us than that purpose, "that we should be conformed to the image of His Son"?

*(Reprinted from the Bible Monthly)*

## LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS XLVII

### "YOUR HOUR, AND THE POWER OF DARKNESS"

"Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke xxii.52,53). With these words the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested, and later tried and crucified, by men who were Satan's emissaries.

It was their hour, and Satan's. The hour of the great conflict which had been foreshadowed in the Garden of Eden had now arrived: "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and thou shalt bruise His heel". In this other garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus had already faced the prospect of the conflict, and had accepted from His Father's hand the cup of suffering which it entailed. "Not My will, but Thine be done," He had prayed.

In all ages the saints of God had called upon Him in time of trouble, and had found deliverance. At times, for special reasons, Satan had been allowed to attack them. We are familiar with the story of Job, whom God designed to bring into greater blessing eventually, after Satan had been allowed to destroy everything in which Job could find comfort. But Satan's attacks were strictly limited in advance by God. It was always to be "thus far, and no farther".

It was not to be thus with the Lord Jesus. He was to meet the full fury of Satan's onslaught, undiminished by any divine restraint. The devil was to be permitted to work his will upon the Son of man, the first utterly holy man he had ever encountered. Satan had the power of death (Heb. ii.14), but death was the wages of sin — by what right should he bring about the death of a sinless man? In doing so he overreached himself, for the death of the guiltless Man became thus an expiation for the sins of the guilty. Thus Satan's power was destroyed.

We see then how necessary it was that the blessed Saviour

should meet Satan alone, unaided, unprotected. He was to gain no advantage from being the Son of God, though of course it was this which gave its infinite value to His sacrifice. What a fearful ordeal! The devil was allowed to do his very worst. There was not only physical weakness and torture, scorn and mocking from servants and soldiers, priests and passers by, but the spiritual conflict of which we can have no conception. The darkness that surrounded the cross symbolized what it meant for Him to be forsaken of God, a sacrifice for sin.

“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” — the solemnity of these words we are apt to miss because they are so full of blessing for *us*. To fathom their meaning we should need to fathom the depths of the love between the Father and the Son. Impossible as this is, the thought of it can give us a measure of the love the Father has shown towards us. Similarly, Paul’s words “the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me” gain new force when we ponder what the giving up entailed.

Let no-one say, “There are other aspects of the Lord’s death which you have ignored”. Who could claim, in such a small compass, to exhaust such a subject! We have merely sought to bring out something of the meaning behind the words quoted at the head of this meditation.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## THE PEOPLE OF GOD

### CHILDREN OF GOD

Until recent times the completion of some form or other has usually required the inclusion of “Christian” names in addition to one’s surname. In doing so most people have acknowledged that they are “Christian” in spite of the fact that they are rarely seen in any place of worship and have never read the Bible. For them their Christianity goes no further than the names by which they are identified. Today even this fine point of distinction is fast disappearing.

In this study, the title of the people of God for our consideration is "Children of God"; but like "Christian" it is often mis-appropriated. It is one thing to call ourselves "children of God" and it is another for the Father so to show His love "that we should be called children of God" (1 John iii.1 (JND)). The title is a distinctive one of God's people and distinguishes them from men of the world.

Who then are the children of God? Are not all men children of God?

### **Their Birth**

These questions are best answered by asking another. Do we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? At the beginning of the Gospel of John we read, "as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to be children of God, to those that believe on His name" (John i.12 (JND)). The word John uses here and in 1 John iii.1 is translated in the Authorised Version as "sons"; but is more correctly to be rendered as "children", a word which denotes birth and the possibility of growth and progress. Then in chapter iii our Lord says to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again". This new birth is the starting point of a real Christian life; not a mere reformation of life, but a new life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v.17) is the inspired testimony.

Are we truly believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, then we have the right, a perfect right, and the privilege to call ourselves children of God. The man who receives Jesus Christ by faith is made a child of God, and thereby becomes a member of the family of God. Apart from the new birth there is no means of entry.

### **Their Father**

Now the children of God, born of the Spirit of God, are entitled to address God as their Father. Even babes in Christ know Him as such (1 John ii.13). Further, as our Father it is possible to have fellowship with Him (1 John i.3) and we

have the comfort of knowing that He is interested in all that concerns us, while He supplies our every need, above all that we ask or think (Phil. iv.19, Eph. iii.20).

The man who is truly a child of God finds evidence for this in every facet of life. *With* God and *on* God he lives; *in* God he lives; and God lives in him. All his expectations are from God. At all times and in all places, and in every way he proves that he is a child of God because he continues to draw his life from his heavenly Father.

One of the marks of a true child of God is drawn out by the Apostle John when in chapter three of his Epistle he divides all men simply into children of God and children of the devil, and recognises no intermediate classes. We do not always readily see this in the complexity and confusion of human society, but essentially it is there. For John, the children of God form a distinct body marked by righteousness and love; they show an unfeigned love for one another and forsake the life of sin for the life of holiness (1 John iv.7, v.18).

### **Their Likeness**

This leads to another consideration. Those who are members of the family must reflect the family likeness. By virtue of the new birth we acquire eternal life, and this is not merely an unending life but a special quality of life which is entered into here and now, not simply at the end of the age. This life is shown in love to God and love to our fellow believers, and is an evidence of being "born of God". How sad it is that the likeness is so imperfect! Surely this is why the Apostle Paul entreats his readers to be "followers (imitators) of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. v.1-2).

*Be like Jesus, this my song,  
In the home and in the throng;  
Be like Jesus, all day long!  
I would be like Jesus.*

But if the likeness is at present deficient, one day it will be perfected. God's children *will* be like Christ. "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him" (1 John iii.2 (RV)). As yet we cannot begin to understand what the perfected likeness to Christ will be, but there is an assurance that it will be a likeness to His glorified Being. Scripture declares that those "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii.29 — see also 2 Cor. iii.18).

*What we shall be not yet appears,  
But like the Lord each child shall shine;  
Then till we leave this vale of tears  
Accept our praise that we are Thine.*

T. D. SPICER

## GOD INCARNATE, II

In considering last month the proofs which Scripture affords of our Saviour's deity, we saw that He made tremendous claims for Himself which could only be justified by their being *true*. Before leaving this part of the subject, we ought to consider His miracles, as being the evidence He Himself pointed to for the truth of His claims. To the Jews He said, "Though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John x.38).

It is for those who accept the Bible that we write, so that the *fact* of the miracles is not in dispute. The point is, do they establish His deity? Now, though prophets such as Moses and Elijah had wrought miracles before, and the apostles had wrought them after Jesus, there are several striking differences.

Firstly, the Old Testament prophets made it plain that they acted solely as Jehovah's agents and at His express command, and the apostles invariably acted in the name of

Jesus, and thus by the power and authority He gave them. Jesus, however, stated that it was the Father dwelling in Him that wrought, so that every miracle was a testimony to His divine Sonship.

Secondly, the miracles of Jesus have a unique character: they flowed, as it were, naturally from Him. Healing followed at His touch, or even when faith touched *Him*, and when He raised the dead it was equally direct. He did not need, as did Elisha, to pray and then prostrate himself upon the dead (2 Kings iv.33-35), or to kneel and pray as Peter did (Acts ix.40). He needed no express command from God, no rod to stretch out like Moses, but at His word the tempest subsided and the wind was still.

The crowning miracle — His own resurrection — is the acid test of His claims, for throughout His ministry He referred to this as the “sign” of His authority. At His *first* cleansing of the temple, when the Jews demanded a sign, His reply was, “Destroy this temple (sanctuary), and in three days I will raise it up” (John ii.19). Twice, later on, He referred to His resurrection as “the sign of the prophet Jonah”, refusing to give any other (Matt. xii.39,40; xvi.4). And repeatedly to His disciples He foretold His rising again. Thus this sign now abundantly verifies all the claims He made.

### HIS NAME

“Jesus”, the Greek form of the Hebrew “Joshua”, which is itself a contraction of “Jehoshua”, and means “Jehovah will save”, was not an uncommon name among the Jews. Some parents may have bestowed it on their children out of patriotism, but the more godly surely thought of its meaning, and looked forward to Jehovah accomplishing salvation for Israel. But how much more did it mean to Mary and Joseph, when the latter was divinely instructed, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for *He shall save* His people from their sins”! For the words “He shall save” refer to the child to be born, showing that He was Jehovah come to save His



people. The groundwork of this salvation was laid at the cross, while the further deliverance, from their enemies' power, is brought before us in Zechariah xiv. There we read of Jehovah going forth to fight (v.3), of His feet standing on the mount of Olives (v.4), and of His coming with all the saints (v.5). It is Jesus Himself Who will fulfil all these prophecies to the letter.

## THE FIRST AND THE LAST

"Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God" (Is. xlv.6). We can readily understand the statement that God is the first, for the Creator must precede the creation; but what does "the last" mean? Probably that if all created things were to disappear, He would remain. Now John, in his visions on Patmos, twice hears the Lord Jesus using these same words of Himself: in Rev. i.17 "Fear not; I am the first and the last"; and "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" in Rev. xxii.13. In claiming to be the first, Jehovah pointedly says there is no other beside Him, so that the words of the Lord Jesus here are an incontestable claim to deity.

## DIFFICULTIES

Let us now consider a few of the difficulties which are brought forward from time to time.

Many of these are difficulties only to those who have not grasped the wonder of the Incarnation — the reality of that self-emptying which the Son of God undertook for our sakes. For example, when He says "I can of Mine own self do nothing" (John v.30) it is not a confession of creature weakness, but an expression of that complete subjection to, and reliance on, the Father, in that place which He had taken when He became man. Similarly, expressions of His being sent by the Father and commanded by the Father and

eventually glorified by the Father display that same subjection.

Again when telling the disciples of His departure from this world He said, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father: for My Father is greater than I" (John xiv.28). It is not that in His own inherent, eternal being He is less than God, but that in the place He had taken it was true, as God in heaven is greater than man upon earth.

A similar explanation is called for in Heb. i.4, "Being made (or rather, having become) so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they". Here is considered His place as glorified Man at God's right hand — His path upon earth completed, His sufferings finished, and what is the name which He inherits? He inherits that glorious name which God had made known through His prophets, and the writer goes on to enumerate its glories. First, He is Son of God, even as born into this world (Luke i.35); second, *all* the angels are summoned to do homage to Him; third, as God's King He is saluted as "God" — "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". True, rulers appointed by God are sometimes called "gods" (Ps. lxxxii.6), but always in the plural; here it is *His own* glory, and *His own* throne. True, He has fellows, for He became man for that very purpose, but always He is superior to them. Last of all, there is that title which was too wonderful, too holy, for a Jew to pronounce — LORD, or Jehovah, the Creator, the Unchanging One. There are, of course, other glories which are brought out later in the epistle.

## HIS KNOWLEDGE

The limitations of our human understanding are clearly revealed when we try to think of divine omniscience moving in the sphere of human consciousness. The problem is quite beyond our reason, and some of the worst of modern errors have come in because men would not acknowledge this.

But if we confine ourselves to what Scripture plainly teaches, we learn that Jesus had always a complete knowledge of the will and purposes of God at all times. He was never taken by surprise, never in a hurry, and never made a mistake.

The A.V. translation is often at fault in putting "*when Jesus knew*" instead of the more literal "*Jesus knowing*". For example, when the paralysed man was brought to Him, it is "*Jesus seeing their faith*", and again "*perceiving*" the reasonings of the scribes, while "*when He knew*" implies that earlier He had not known. In other cases we are shown that "*He knew all men*" (John ii.24,25); He knew just where Nathanael was and what he was doing; knew where Zacchaeus was hiding, knew his name, and still more, knew the desires of his heart!

Then again, Jesus spoke with perfect certainty of events, past, present and future. There is nothing vague about His prophecies.

If we now turn our attention to Mark xiii.32, where, speaking of His appearing in glory, He says, "*But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father*", the question arises, in what sense are we to regard this statement of His ignorance of that day and hour? Now elsewhere He tells the disciples that the Father had kept times and seasons within His own authority (Acts i.7). Can the words "*know not*" be used in any other sense than that of simple ignorance? Certainly they can, as when the Lord will say to false professors, "*Verily I say unto you, I know you not*" (Matt. xxv.12). Thus it is apparent, taking these considerations together, He meant that as to the vital moment, the day and hour of His rising up to take His power and reign, He awaited the Father's word, and till then He would not know it.

### **THE WORD WAS GOD (John i.1)**

The last clause of the well known opening of John's Gospel, as given in King James' version, "*In the beginning*

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*" is one of those scriptures we referred to in introducing this subject in which perverse men seek to find ambiguity. They point to the omission (in the Greek) of the definite article before "God" in that clause only. Of course, there is a reason for this omission, but most emphatically it does not mean that there is any doubt as to John's assertion of the deity of the Word — the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some modern translations seek to make the matter clear by a different rendering. Moffatt reads "the Logos was divine"; N.E.B. reads "what God was, the Word was", but the effect of these translations on many readers is simply to puzzle them.

Let us look at it in this way. Can the sentence be turned round, so as to read "God was the Word"? The answer is, No. But had the definite article been inserted before "God", the sentence could have been read either way. In that case, the Father and the Holy Spirit would have been excluded from the Godhead. If we look at another scripture, for example 1 John iii.4, the clause "sin is lawlessness" (JND) could be read "lawlessness is sin", for the definite article is used before both nouns. All forms of lawlessness are forms of sin. An example of the opposite kind is the sentence "God is love". Here the article is used before "God" but not before "love", so that this sentence cannot be reversed: it cannot be read "Love is God".

Thus in the scripture we are considering, John is telling us that the Word is not a mere effusion from God, but He is of the Divine Essence.

## **GOD BLESSED FOR EVER**

Paul, listing the glories and privileges bestowed upon God's earthly people, leads up to the climax "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. ix.5).

Note that the *whole point* here is the *greatness* of Him

Who deigned to become Israel's Messiah. Thus when men seek to destroy this assertion of the deity of Christ by turning the last words into a doxology (e.g. the N.E.B. reads "May God, supreme over all, be blessed for ever!") this point is quite lost. For why is Christ's birth such a glory to Israel, if He be merely man? And why a doxology, when Paul is lamenting Israel's failure to realize their privileges?

Thus we may rest assured that the A.V. brings out the true meaning: Christ is God over all, blessed for ever. Blessed be His name!

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## THE VALUE OF WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

(Read Deuteronomy viii.2,3)

The children of Israel had come to the end of their wilderness journey and were about to enter the land of promise. The difficulties and trials of the wilderness were over and now they eagerly looked forward to the possession of their inheritance. But they were enjoined not to forget the way the Lord had led them, for that would be to lose the value of their varied experiences.

Valuable indeed these experiences had been, for the people that came out of Egypt, though redeemed by the blood of the passover lamb, were morally quite unfit to enter the land of promise. And it was a very different generation that followed Joshua across Jordan from that which forty years before had turned back in unbelief.

Now *we*, like Paul (Phil. iii.13), are to forget the things which are behind, and to reach forward to those which are before, but it is not the way the Lord has led us that we are to forget, but rather our own spiritual attainments hitherto. So that we may take this exhortation in Deuteronomy to ourselves, knowing that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning". Though not yet come to the end of our pilgrimage, all of us have much that we can look back upon with profit to ourselves.

The *purpose* of the wilderness trials in the case of the children of Israel is here stated: "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no." Not that God needs to learn what is in our hearts, for he knows already, and has told us in the plainest terms what their condition is (Jer. xvii.9); yet we do not believe the truth about it, until the wilderness trials have again and again proved it to us. What a terrible revelation it was for the godly among the Israelites we may learn from such scriptures as Psalms lxxviii. and cvi. Is it any less so in our own case? Can we not recall many an occasion when we have murmured at His ways with us, have forgotten His past goodness, and have tempted Him by our unbelief?

How often, for instance, have we come away from a meeting where we have received much blessing for our souls, and then have utterly broken down, when, perhaps, we have suffered some disappointment, or some petty thing has happened to annoy us? Yes, these things show what is in our hearts, and ought they not to humble us? Ought not such failures (to say nothing of more serious matters still) to keep us from ever trusting to the "flesh" to produce anything for God? Let us "remember", and we shall be saved from the necessity of having to re-learn that humbling lesson.

"And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii.3).

Perhaps this was the greatest trial of all. That an almighty God, and a God Who loved His people, should suffer them to hunger — what a trial this must have been to the faith of a Caleb! And it is so still, when some pressing need about which we have besought the Lord goes unsupplied. Perhaps some reader is passing through such a trial. Why is it? It *may* be the consequence of one's own self-will in choosing one's own pathway. But it is not always so, for who led the

people to Marah? to Taberah? to Meribah? It was the Lord. It was "to humble thee".

Like the children of Israel, we find that we have no resources of our own, and that even in the affairs of this life we cannot do without Him, much less in spiritual affairs. We learn, too, what a blessed thing it is to cast *all* our care on Him, to receive all from the hands of our loving Father. The Lord God took away from His earthly people their ordinary sustenance, and made them depend directly upon Himself. If at night they thought, "Where is our food for to-morrow coming from?" they could only say, "We have nothing but what the Lord sends from Heaven". And did He ever fail them? Not one day during forty years.

But we are apt to get occupied with the means, and to lose the sense of our dependence upon Himself. Bread is a means of subsistence, but God would have us learn that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord". Life, apart from Him, is not life. Oh, to have a deeper consciousness of our direct dependence upon God!

But this last scripture brings us to what is inseparably connected with dependence, and that is obedience. What a blessed example of obedience we have in our Lord Jesus, Who could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work"! He, in the wilderness, refused to use His almighty power to supply His need, but was content to hunger just so long as the Father willed it, and He quoted this very scripture to repel the devil's temptation. Do we not see in Him the very perfection of obedience, and that in the midst of suffering; of trust in the goodness of One Who "suffered Him to hunger"; and of dependence on the written word to justify His position?

If we desire to have God's provision for us, it must be distinctly *His*, in His way, and at His time. This is one reason why sometimes the answer to our prayers is delayed: we are not willing to submit to God's will. If it is so with

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(continued from page 144)*

Then at the transfiguration, when Peter was transported at the sight of Moses and Elijah with his Lord, the Father again testified to His Son and called the attention of the disciples to Him rather than to the others. The occasion was significant too in that His utter rejection at the hands of men was soon to be consummated at the cross. There it was to be darkness and desolation for Him for our sakes, but here from the bright cloud the Father declared His own thoughts of His Son.

The third occasion (John xii.28) was, the Lord declared, not for His sake so much as for the people's. It declared the final victory of what the Son had come to do for the Father's glory, whatever appearances might be.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

(To be concluded, D.V.)

## THE SEVENFOLD ACTIVITY OF THE COMFORTER

The Comforter was first promised by our Lord when He said to His disciples, "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter" (John xiv.16). What is the meaning of this term? The word "comforter" is derived from the Latin "con" (together) and "fortes" (to make strong). In its primary use, therefore, it means one who stands by to strengthen, support and encourage. Was not this what the Lord Himself had been doing for His disciples during the years of His ministry? Had He not always been at their side to strengthen and encourage them? Now He says to them, "The Father will send you *another* Comforter, One Who will care for you as I have done, only He will always be with you to sustain and uphold you. He will abide with you for ever."

The Greek word "Paraclete" or "Comforter" also has the meaning of "Advocate", One who undertakes our cause and pleads for us. The word is used in 1 John ii.2 in reference to our Lord: "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous". As one esteemed writer puts it, "The word Paraclete is not merely Comforter, but one who is identified with our interests, one who undertakes all our causes, one who engages to see us through our difficulties, one who in every way becomes both our representative and the great personal agent that transacts all our business for us" (W.K.).

With these thoughts in mind it is interesting to study the sevenfold function of the Comforter as given to us in chapters xiv, xv and xvi of John's Gospel.

(1) "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv.17)

In speaking of "*another* Comforter" the Lord had compared the One Who was coming with Himself, but He goes on to draw a contrast, for the Comforter when He came would abide with them for ever, whereas the Lord had remained with them for only a few brief years. In Old Testament times the Spirit had come upon men and controlled them for some special purpose, but it was something entirely new that a divine Person should come to earth to abide for ever. The Comforter would not only

dwell with them, but would be *in* them: that is, He would take up His abode in the saints, and make them His permanent dwelling place.

This indwelling is both individual and collective. Each believer is indwelt by the Spirit, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is in you?*" (1 Cor. vi.19). What a motive this should be for a godly, consistent walk! For the apostle goes on to say, "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body".

The Spirit's abiding is collective also, for He finds His dwelling-place in the church of God, as is stated in Eph. ii.19-23: "In Whom (Christ) all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit". It is a wonderful truth that the Holy Spirit has taken up His residence in the assembly, and is the all-sufficient Guide and Controller of the divinely-given gifts in their practical exercise, as 1 Cor. xii. emphasizes.

(2) **"He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"** (John xiv.26).

Throughout the Lord's ministry the disciples had been privileged to sit at His feet and to listen to His teaching: were they never to hear more from His blessed lips? And would they ever be able to remember what He had taught them? The Lord assures them that the Comforter would be sent by the Father in Christ's name, that is, in His stead, to represent the interests of Christ during His absence, so that the teaching would not cease, and what the Lord had taught them would not after all be lost. Not only would the Spirit bring to their remembrance what they had heard from the Lord's own lips, but He would amplify it with "the all things" of the New Testament scriptures.

(3) **"He shall testify of Me"** (John xv.26).

The great purpose of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness to Christ. John the Baptist, the works of Christ, the Father's voice, and the Scriptures, all bore witness to Christ in His lowly

path on earth (see John v.32-39), and now the Spirit of truth would testify of Him as the risen, glorified Man in heaven. In the power of the same Spirit the apostles would also bear witness, as Peter afterwards acknowledges, "We are witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost" (Acts v.32).

(4) **"And having come, He will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"** (John xvi.8-11, JND).

Here we have the present relation of the Holy Spirit, not to the saints but to the world. By His coming and abiding in the saints, He affords proof to the world of three things: sin, righteousness and judgment.

(a) **He brings demonstration of sin.**

Man's unbelief in the Son of God is the unanswerable proof of the sin of their hearts, as it is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce in men this conviction.

(b) **He brings demonstration of righteousness.**

If Christ's absence is proof of the world's sin, the presence of Christ in heavenly glory is the expression of righteousness. For the One Whom men put upon the cross has gone back to the Father and the world sees Him no longer. It is *right* that He should now have the highest place in the glory: it is *right* too that the world that totally rejected Him should see Him no more. What a demonstration of God's perfect righteousness!

(c) **He brings demonstration of judgment.**

It is God's purpose to set His Son in the place of supreme power in the universe. Satan's object has always been to hinder this divine purpose. At the cross it looked as if he had triumphed, for had he not moved men to reject and crucify the very One Whom God had destined for the throne of highest glory? But the presence of the Holy Ghost here is proof that the rejected One is now glorified in spite of all that men in the power of Satan have done. God has triumphed over man's sin and Satan's power. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the One Whom God has glorified, and testifies that the great adversary, the devil, is now doomed to final and absolute judgment. It is

one of the functions of the Holy Spirit of God to afford proof that the ruler of this world was judged at the cross. The judgment is not yet executed, but morally and before God the whole world-system stands condemned with its ruler. And the very fact that the Spirit is here working in the hearts and consciences of men demonstrates that Satan himself is displaced and is indeed judged.

(5) **“He will guide you into all truth”** (John xvi.13).

The Spirit is ready to lead us into the full range of the purposes of God for the glory of Christ in the church, the blessing of the church with Christ, the earthly blessing in the millennial kingdom and the glory of the eternal state. It has been said, He will *guide* us, but He will not force or drive us. Are we ready on our part to be led by the Spirit to Christ, as Rebekah was led by the servant to Isaac?

(6) **“He will show you things to come”** (John xvi.13).

The Spirit does not act independently, “He shall not speak from Himself: but whatsoever He shall hear He shall speak, and He will announce to you what is coming” (JND).

The prophetic word is found largely in the New Testament, especially in the epistles and particularly the book of Revelation. And as the Spirit unfolds these prophetic scriptures to us so are our hearts detached from a world under judgment and attracted to the One, now enthroned in glory, but soon coming to receive us to Himself.

(7) **“He shall glorify Me”** (John xvi.14).

This is the last and doubtless the greatest statement of our Lord concerning the work of the Comforter. His great purpose is to glorify Christ. “He will take of Mine” says the Lord, “and will show it unto you”. Then He adds, “All things that the Father hath are Mine”. Those are the things into which the Holy Spirit is ready to guide us. He will bring before us all the blessedness of the world to come; He will take of the glories of Christ and make them known to us; He will disclose to us the whole range of the Father’s counsels for the glory of Christ and our heavenly portion as associated with Him.

What a wonderful provision the Lord Jesus has made in sending the Comforter to undertake for us during His absence, and to lead us into the enjoyment of all that is ours as one with Him. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii.9, 10).

R. A. CREETH

## THE PEOPLE OF GOD

### SONS OF GOD

"Who is his father?" People are often interested in another's parentage, and the family background of an individual will sometimes give a guide to character. Then, sometimes, the colloquialism is heard, "Like father, like son". This may be true, or it may not; either physically, morally, or in outlook. Often, spiritually speaking, father and son are completely dissimilar. What resemblance is there, however, between the people of God and their heavenly Father? In what sense can they be called "sons"?

The Apostle John wrote, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii.1): but the word translated "sons" in our Authorised Version is, as we have seen in our previous study, more correctly rendered as "children". It is to the Apostle Paul we must turn for a true understanding of the title "Sons of God". There is a word used by him in his letters, and he only of the New Testament writers employs it, which speaks of adoption. The word is *HUIOTHESIA* and it occurs in Romans where he tells his readers that they "have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii.15). The word also occurs in the following verses, Rom. viii.23 and ix.4; Gal. iv.5; and Eph. i.5. From a study of these occurrences it is possible to discover yet another facet of the wonderful salvation which is provided by our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## A Relationship

In his pristine nature, man was made for fellowship with God, but sin entered in and destroyed the relationship which God intended and as a result man was estranged from his Maker. Through the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross the believer is freed from the guilt and consequences of sin and is established in a new relationship with God. He now becomes a "son" by adoption (Gal. iv.5) and is no longer a "servant to sin" (Rom. vi.20).

*This high honour we inherit,  
Thy free gift through Jesu's blood;  
God the Spirit with our spirit  
Witnesseth we're sons of God.*

The title "sons of God" indicates particularly the relationship of believers to God in Christ, the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is emphatically, and in a far higher sense, The Son of God. He alone is "the only begotten Son of God".

But His people are "sons of God" by reason of their union with Him. John Owen wrote, "Adoption is the authoritative translation of a believer, from the family of the world and Satan into the family of God, with his investiture in all the privileges and advantages of that family".

## A New Concept

Now for Jewish believers adoption was an entirely new concept. The Jews were taught the fatherhood of God by Moses—"Is He not thy Father that hath taught thee? Hath He not made thee, and established thee?" (Deut. xxxii.6). The sonship so established was based on creation and the redemption of Israel from Egypt—"O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we are all the work of Thy hand" (Isa. lxiv.8—see also chapter lxiii.16). The language of the Old Testament does not possess an equivalent expression to that of "adoption" in the New Testament.

Sonship as taught by the Apostle Paul is a complete change of status, planned from eternity and imparted by Jesus Christ (Eph. i.5). In the New Testament sonship is based on the re-



birth of the individual from God and the receiving of the Spirit of adoption. In his letter to the Romans the Apostle shows his concern for the Jews and writes of his "kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption . . ." (Rom. ix.3-4); but his reference is to the adoption of the nation by God which entitled them to the land of promise, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Exod. iv.22—see also Hosea xi.1).

### **A Teacher**

The Lord's people bear this title because as "sons of God" they are instructed by Him, and are obedient to his discipline. The Lord declared concerning all who come to Him, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God" (John vi.45) and to His own He promised an infallible Teacher, the Holy Spirit (John xiv.26). So, as the Saviour has said, we believe on Him "through their word", and are taught by the same divine Teacher, being made "wise unto salvation" and growing "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". Trials and afflictions only prove our sonship, for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons" (Heb. xii.6-7). If God has given some affliction then it is best to learn to accept it, for it "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness".

### **Communion**

When the Apostle writes of the "Spirit of adoption" to his Galatian readers he is indicating that they have received, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, a sonship spirit, and cry to God as their Father in Christ (Gal. iv.6). But there are many Christians who are not living as sons in daily communion with their Father. Sonship implies access, access to the Father, the communion of a son with his Father. Anything which comes between a child of God and his Father will break communion. Sin must be recognised and put away. If the believer is not using the privilege of access to his heavenly Father someone, somewhere, may be deprived of blessing.

## An Heir

There is another facet of our salvation brought out in the use of this title for the people of God; it is that they are "heirs of God", as we read, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. iv.7). How matchless is the grace of God in "bringing many sons unto glory"! Moreover, because of their union with the great Captain of their salvation, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii.10-11). We stand on holy ground! There is a reluctance to sing hymns which speak of the Lord Jesus as an "elder Brother". We cannot talk of the Lord like that, although He speaks of us in that way. In His great grace He has taken us from being the slaves of sin to being His brethren. The wonder, the grace, the privilege of it! Brethren because sons! Sons of God.

Bearing such a name, how carefully should we walk, for fear that we should bring dishonour and reproach on it! God would have His children to be separate from an ungodly world. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi.17-18).

*Sons we are through God's election,  
Who in Jesus Christ believe;  
By His own predestination,  
Sovereign grace we here receive;  
Lord, Thy mercy  
Does both grace and glory give.*

*Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!  
Ask, "Oh, why such love to me?"  
Grace has put me in the number  
Of the Saviour's family;  
Hallelujah!  
Thanks, eternal thanks to Thee.*

## JESUS THE SON OF GOD

In previous articles about the Incarnation we have referred but little to the fact of our Saviour being the Son of God, deeming this subject to be worthy of special attention. And as we now turn to it, it is well to make clear that in the Bible the title "Son of God" is used in more than one sense. Thus in Job i.6 (and probably Gen. vi.2) it seems to refer to angels. In Exodus iv.22 Jehovah speaks of Israel as His son, His firstborn, and in 1 Chronicles xxviii.6 of Solomon in a similar way. In these cases personal relationship is evidently not in question, but the title seems to signify one who is an object of God's special favour.

When we consider the title as applied to the Lord Jesus (although the promise spoken to Solomon is also one which He will inherit as God's king) it is the personal relationship which is manifestly the intended sense. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" may serve to give the keynote. Here we see, not favour bestowed, but the closest possible relationship, and such nearness to the Father's heart, such a sharing of love and affection with Him, that He is able to reveal all the Father's heart to us.

### HIS BIRTH

When Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary the conception and birth of her Son he declared that He would "be called the Son of the Highest". Now no doubt we may see in these words the sense of His being one whom God highly favoured, but a far deeper sense is revealed in the angel's next pronouncement. For when Mary asks how it was possible for her to bear a child, he shows that the conception would be by the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon her, so that human fatherhood was excluded. Hence the infant would be known as "Son of God", as Gabriel says, "*therefore* also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God".

At this point we may appropriately refer to the prophecy of Psalm ii.: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me,

Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee". It was no mere poetry, nor just a title to be bestowed upon one already born, but a divinely revealed fact that He is Son of God by birth. There are deep questions which it is possible to raise at this point, but Scripture reveals nothing more, and we do well to be silent.

The Gospel of Luke, from which we have quoted, lays emphasis upon the human nature of the Lord Jesus; the divine side is brought out more particularly in the Gospel of John, to which we will shortly turn. At this point let us insist that there is the most perfect harmony between the two: the relationship of Son in manhood flows from the eternal relationship.

The earliest utterance from Jesus' lips bears witness to His consciousness of being the Son of God. His astonishment that His mother should not have *expected* Him to be "in My Father's house", and should have searched for Him anywhere else, was plainly revealed by His reply to His mother in the temple when He was twelve years old.

### PRE-INCARNATION SONSHIP

There can be no doubt whatever that the natural, obvious sense of the many references in the Gospel of John to the Sonship of the Saviour is that He is Son of God in His own essential being. Since the beginning this has been the faith of the Church, but as it has in recent times been questioned, it is well to rehearse once more, and to examine carefully, the testimony of Scripture.

While hesitating to deny outright the eternal Sonship of the Lord, the questioners claim that the term is not used in Scripture, and that nothing is revealed of the relationship except in regard to incarnation.

That the phrases "eternal Son" or "eternal sonship" are not used in Scripture is undeniable, but neither is "divine Person", which these reasoners frequently use, nor is "Trinity" which they do not deny to accord with the truth. The present writer prefers to speak of "essential Sonship", because the important question is whether Scripture teaches that this relationship

is true of the Godhead essentially, or whether it teaches that it is a new relationship which came into being at the Incarnation. And immediately the fact emerges that, while the Greek word "to become" is never used of the Lord's eternal being, it is used of His becoming flesh (John i.14), of His coming of a woman (Gal. iv.4), and of His becoming subject to the law (*ibid*), but is *never* used of His Sonship. "God sent forth His Son" it says, but not that He became the Son. Again, "He was made (*lit.* became) in the likeness of men . . . and became obedient unto death" (Phil. ii.7,8). Those who speak of what is *not* said should surely note this silence of Scripture!

To simple souls John iii.16 is sufficient answer. For the greatness of God's love is proved by giving His Son. But what did He love? A world at enmity with Himself, a ruined, unworthy world—this is what drew out His love, and led Him to give His only begotten Son. But how could a sonship which had no existence till the Saviour had come into the world be a proof of the love which gave Him?

The Lord Jesus spoke of the love which the Father had for Him before the foundation of the world (John xvii.24). Now each relationship has its own peculiar love. The love between brother and brother is not the same as that between father and son, or between husband and wife. Moreover among men love may be weak, or wanting, but between the Persons of the Godhead it is perfect and unchanging. Hence if the love was there before the world's foundation the relationship between the Father and the Son was there too.

Another scripture which brings this out plainly is the Parable of the Vineyard. The owner of the vineyard, after many *servants* had been refused, has one resource left. "Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them saying, They will reverence my son" (Mk. xii.6). Here the "having" and the loving, are distinctly prior to the sending. To send Christ to Israel was a divine purpose regarding the well beloved Son of God.

John tells us "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil". But how

can that be manifested which had no existence prior to its manifestation?

We are told that the sentence "God sent His Son" or even "The Father sent the Son" does not necessarily imply pre-incarnation sonship. Let us test this assertion.

If a man says "My wife was born in London" no-one needs telling that she was not his wife when she was born, and there is no need to guard the statement. But if he says "My wife worked in London", we are uncertain whether she worked there before or since her marriage, and further information is needed for clearness. Now in all the many statements about God sending His Son into the world the Holy Spirit has *never once* guarded the statement to prevent us drawing the natural conclusion that He was the Son in eternity. Hence, we must give to a sentence such as "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go unto the Father" its natural, unforced meaning—He was the Son before He came forth from the Father, just as truly as He was Son when He returned to the Father. To say, in face of such a scripture, that nothing is revealed of the Sonship before incarnation, is patently false.

### THE FATHER'S TESTIMONY

Thankfully we turn from controversy to meditate upon the Father's testimony to His incarnate Son. The occasions are themselves worthy of note.

First, after John had baptized Him, the Father announced "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I have found My delight" (JND). Others were baptized because they were sinners, but He to fulfil all that was righteous: this also was well pleasing to the Father.

The Father declared both His love for His Son and His delight in Him, before Jesus had begun to minister, in order that men might know from the commencement the personal excellence of the Saviour-to-be.

*(Continued inside front cover)*

## QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

### QUESTION (1)

In Numbers iv.1-15 where the covering of the furniture of the Tabernacle when it had to be transported is dealt with, a blue cloth was used for the lampstand, the golden altar and the instruments of service, but a purple cloth for the brazen altar. Also the laver is not mentioned among the things to be covered. Why these differences?

A. SMART

### ANSWERS

Answers are invited from readers who believe they have light on this subject.

As regards the laver, if it were meant to be uncovered, one would expect this to be stated. We must always remember that only copies of the Scriptures are available to us, and it is *possible* that the instruction regarding the laver may have been omitted by a copyist's error. Editor

### QUESTION (2)

In Proverbs xxv.16 we find advice about eating honey which is sound sense, but hardly seems worthy of a place there. Has it some deeper meaning?

### ANSWER

The answer to the question is surely to be found in verse 17. A friendly neighbour is attractive, but how often has such friendship broken down because of a lack of restraint in partaking of its "honey"!

Why was honey forbidden in the offerings of God? Was it that natural sweetness, like everything else belonging to a fallen creation, comes "short of the glory of God", unlike that divine love which never fails (1 Cor. xiii.8)? Editor

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