

# SCRIPTURE TRUTH

*"Thy Word is Truth"*

## THIRTY-FIFTH VOLUME

comprising the years  
1945, 1946 and 1947

*"Thy word is true from the beginning"*

(Psalm 119: 160)

or

*"The sum of Thy word is truth"*

(New Translation)

THE CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT

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# Scripture Truth

## GOD WITH US, FOR US, IN US.

F. B. HOLE

**L**ET us start another year with a very real and deep sense of how very near God has come to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. To some of us evils of a physical and material sort are all too near, and to all of us the seductive evils, that proceed from the world without and the flesh within, are very present. From all these evils we shall only be preserved as God is real to us and we walk before Him.

In the course of his prophecy Jeremiah raised this striking question: “Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?” (23: 23). What was the answer to that question? From the moment that God redeemed Israel out of Egypt to be His people, He had made known His desire to dwell in their midst. Yet under the conditions that then existed He had to shroud Himself in fire and cloud and awful majesty, and man had to keep his distance. This was so, whether with Moses, or Aaron and his sons, or with Solomon, when the Temple was finished, and yet the priests could not enter when the glory of the Lord filled the House. It was nearness in one sense, but distance in another.

We open the New Testament, and all is changed, for we are immediately introduced to JESUS, who is EMMANUEL, which being interpreted is, “God with us.” Here we have something entirely new. He

who once dwelt in the devouring fire on Sinai was now amongst men in perfect manhood and in lowly grace. The One who is light and who dwells in light unapproachable, had now appeared in such fashion as to soften down the piercing rays of His glory so that human eyes might take them in. Those who were His disciples in the days of His flesh could say, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” God was with them indeed, and they were not afraid. We have not His personal presence to-day, but we have the inspired record of His presence, and we have what the disciples who followed Him on earth did not have—the presence and indwelling of the Spirit of God—and therefore, “God with us,” may be a reality to us to-day.

God desires to dwell in the midst of His people, yet on our side desire for His presence would hardly exist if we did not know what was His attitude towards us. How necessary then to pass on from Matthew to Paul and discover from his pen in the Epistle to the Romans, that He is wholly **for us** and not against us. We read the opening of that Epistle and get such a statement of what man is that we might conclude He must be against us; but the exposure of man's sin is followed by the unveiling of God's grace, reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord. God has acted in redeeming power so that by the time

we reach the close of chapter 8, a challenge can be flung out to the universe, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Is God for us? He is, for He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. There was no ram in the thicket for Him, as there was for Isaac. He rather became like "a ram caught in a thicket," for us, and was offered up "in the stead of," that is, substitutionally for us. That being so, "It is God that justifieth."

But not only does He justify in the Christ who died and is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, but we are enfolded in the embrace of the love of God, that prompted all, and which finds its expression and its centre in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here we pause a moment. God is **with us in grace**, and He is **for us in righteousness**, which is the fruit of the love which finds its eternal spring in Himself and in Christ Jesus our Lord. What can be more assuring than this as we face all the difficulties of the hour, and anticipate perhaps all the upheavals and earthly sorrows that may lie ahead? God is with us and God is for us. Can there be more than that?

There can; we must turn to John's first Epistle to have it fully brought before us. It is reiterated in a very striking way in his fourth chapter. We will quote a few extracts:—

"Greater is **He that is in you**, than he that is in the world."

"If we love one another, **God dwelleth in us** . . . Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and **He in us**, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, **God dwelleth in him**, and he in God."

These quotations are sufficient to emphasize our point. The believer in the Son of God and the confessor of His Name may rejoice with confidence that God is not only with Him objectively in Christ, and for Him as guaranteed by the sacrificial work of Christ and the love that lay behind it, but also **in him** in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

In the verses quoted, the Divine indwelling is connected with the Spirit of God being in us; with the love of God—the Divine nature—being operative in us; and with the confession of Jesus as the Son of God. By the Spirit we confess Jesus as Lord, and also as the Son of God. By that same Spirit the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and we ourselves are taught to love one another. By the indwelling Spirit, who is greater than the adversary—that spirit of evil who is god and prince to this world—we may overcome, however powerful and seductive the force that is arrayed against us. Does not this further reinforce our confidence as we step forth into the unknown future?

There is just this further to be said. God is with us, and He is for us, whatever may be at the moment our state and condition as before Him. But when we come to God in us it is possible and even needful to bring in an "if." This we see in 1 John 4: 12. God dwells in us, "if we love one another." This gives a very practical and experimental bearing to the whole matter.

The Apostle has previously contemplated someone finding his brother with need and shutting up his bowels of compassion from him, and he pertinently asks, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" Now, if we, who are brethren in the family of God, do not manifest the Divine nature in love one toward another, how shall it be said that God is dwelling in us? As we read, both here and in John 1: 18, "No man hath seen God at any time." In the Gospel He was, however, to be seen in the only begotten Son, who is abidingly in the bosom of the Father. In the Epistle, He is to be seen in us who are in the family of God, as born of Him, and who consequently manifest the nature of God in our love one to another.

So let us take this thing very much to heart. If there is no manifestation of the love, what proof is there that God, who is love, is dwelling in us? And there is more involved than this, for just after we read, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Here is love, not circulating within the family of God,

but flowing out from the family in large-hearted testimony to the world, with a view to salvation.

We often deplore, and often have heard others deplore, the little power and effect that seems to accompany the testimony to the world of God as a Saviour. One of the main reasons, which accounts for this sad fact, is here unveiled before us. There is so little display of love—the Divine nature—in the bosom of the Divine family.

God in us has to become a fact which is patent to the view of the world. When it is so, even in a very small measure, it has a very potent effect. So let us not seek to avoid some heart-searching as we step forth into another year. God is with us, as revealed in Christ. He is for us in grace, in righteousness, in love. And He is in us, if indeed we are born of Him and possess His Spirit. Being in us, and being Himself love, it is only an outflow of love from us each that will declare that fact—an outflow, first within the circle of the family of God, and then outwards towards the world.

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## The Blind Man and the Lantern.

I remember reading of a blind man who was found sitting at the corner of a street in a great city with a lantern beside him. Some went up to him and asked what he had the lantern there for, seeing that he was blind, and the light was the same to him as the darkness. The blind man replied: "I HAVE IT SO THAT NO ONE MAY STUMBLE OVER ME."

Let us think of that. Where one man reads the Bible, a hundred read you and me. That is what Paul meant when he said we were "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." I would not give much for all that can be done by sermons, if we do not preach Christ by our lives. If we do not commend the Gospel to people by our holy walk and conversation, we shall not win them to Christ.

## A SEARCHING DEFINITION.

A. J. POLLOCK

**A** DECREPIT old man lived in a single room in a slum, cooking his meagre meals, making his own bed, living on a mere pittance, left alone in the world. One day he was asked this question, a strange one to be asked of a man in his condition: What was his definition of a gentleman? What did he know of gentlemen? Surely they moved in a vastly different circle to his.

The answer he gave was surprising, and satisfying as it was surprising. He replied, "Read Psalm 15, and you'll see a fine definition of a gentleman." On hearing this incident, we turned to Psalm 15, and were immensely struck by the old man's answer, for here we have **God's** definition of a gentleman. The Psalm only consists of five verses, so we may as well repeat it in full.

"**LORD**, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the **LORD**. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

Certainly any man, who acted fully on these lines, would be a gentleman indeed. But let us see what the Psalm teaches. There are many men in this world who are classed as gentlemen, and perhaps in their attitude and conduct to their

fellow men, they would be rightly considered so. But we must ever remember that we have duties to **GOD**, as well as to our fellow men. Nay more, unless our duties are carried out to God, we fail, and are bound to fail, in our real attitude to our fellow men. We might illustrate it thus. Suppose the planets of our solar system were to arrange to keep in right relation to each other, of what use would that be, if the centre of the system, the **SUN**, were ignored in the arrangement? Nothing but terrific disaster would come of such an arrangement. Our parable is easily understood. How can our actions be right if we leave God out of our account? There are many so-called gentlemen, who live as if there were no God. No man can be a true gentleman unless he is a **Christian** gentleman. It matters little what social environment a man is born into, what matters is his relation first of all to **GOD**. Right with Him, he will be right with his fellow man.

We owe our existence to God, we owe our subsistence to God; we owe our spiritual life to God, and we owe our salvation, if we believe the Gospel of the grace of God, to the Saviour, who died on the cross for us.

We read that the man who acts according to this lovely Psalm will abide in God's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill. Living in such an atmosphere, one can well understand how the rest of the Psalm describes his conduct.

The man in this Psalm walks uprightly. Acting rightly towards God, he will naturally act rightly to

his fellow man. Socialism makes a great claim, that if its aims were realized, it would bring in a New Order of security and uplift, that would make men content with their lot. Abraham Lincoln spoke of "the government of the people by the people for the people." This might be described as a horizontal line of man's fallen effort. It does not rise higher than man. But things will not work that way. We must have a perpendicular line, one stretching from heaven to earth. We have the perpendicular line pithily described in the prayer taught by our Lord, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6: 10). What a beautiful world this would be if this were the case. We should have a world of true gentlefolk.

A bishop made a very true remark, "Without Christianity socialism is impossible, and with it it is unnecessary." That means in other words that if God's will were done on earth as it is done in heaven, then all injustice between man and man would cease. Sweating of labour, social inequalities would vanish, as they will one day when the Lord Jesus Christ as the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings.

The man in the Psalm works righteousness. How could he do otherwise, seeing he abides in God's tabernacle and dwells in His holy hill? His very residence there would prove that his ways were pleasing to the Lord.

The man in the Psalm speaks truth **in his heart**. The cynic who said that honesty was the best policy for he had tried both policies,

was not honest in his heart. He was honest for profit, for he found he could gain more by honesty than dishonesty. If he could have gained more by dishonesty, dishonest he would have been. To speak truth from the heart is to love truth for truth's sake. And he who has to do with the God of truth will revere truth and speak it from his heart.

Now we come to what the man in this Psalm does not do. He does not backbite with his tongue. We believe it is a true statement that nine-tenths of the sins committed by humanity have to do with the tongue. The writer James speaks very solemnly of the tongue. Every kind of beast, of bird, of serpent, of the denizen of the sea, can be tamed, but man cannot tame the tongue. What man cannot do, God can do. The Apostle James tells us the tongue is "set on fire of hell." The word for "hell" here is **Gehenna**, a word which first appears in the synoptical Gospels, where it fell from the lips of our Lord, who came to save from hell. Only once outside these instances is the word mentioned, and that by James, in connection with the tongue. We are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, to "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." (Eph. 4: 31). These evil things get expression through the tongue. The man of Psalm 15 restrains his tongue from backbiting.

The man in our Psalm will not do evil to his neighbour, nor listen to stories against his character. He will not be one thing before his neighbour's face and another thing

behind his back. He can be trusted by his neighbour to act rightly in relation to him, for he will act as God would act in this respect.

And how does the man in Psalm 15 react to the character of those around him? The vile man is condemned. Those who fear the Lord are honoured. The wisest of men, King Solomon, tells us plainly that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If we are wise, we are only truly so, as we keep in touch with the source of our wisdom, even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The vile man is condemned. We all have the flesh that answers sympathetically to the flesh in others, and it is only as we judge it in ourselves that we can rightly judge it in others.

The man in Psalm 15, if he swears to his own hurt, changes not. We may illustrate it thus; a man promises to sell his house to a prospective purchaser for £1,000. When the prospective purchaser arrives with his cheque on account, so as to clinch the bargain, he is informed that an offer of £1,200 has been received and accepted. He made the promise verbally, and because it was not in writing he took the chance to go back on his word. The man in Psalm 15 would show that his word was as good as his bond, and would honour his word rather than net a profit by being dishonourable.

It was said that when David Livingstone was about to disappear in Africa, carrying his life in his hand, not knowing what to expect, but imbued with a desire to open up the dark continent to the Gospel of

God, that he declared referring to the blessed Lord, and speaking with the utmost reverence, he was committing himself to the care of a Gentleman, who never went back on His word. He was relying on the strong promise of God with a double negative, which might be translated, "I will never, never, leave thee; never, never, forsake thee." We are assured that Livingstone was not disappointed. Surely our Lord is the great example to-day, for any who would seek to follow in the footsteps of the man in Psalm 15.

The man of Psalm 15 would not put out his money to unjust usury, nor take reward against the innocent. A sum of money lent may be a great boon to the borrower in times of great difficulty, but if an exorbitant rate of interest is charged, the transaction becomes very evil indeed. How many a Shylock has ruined his clients by this means, fastening on them shackles they cannot break. The man of our Psalm would not operate in "the Black Market," taking unscrupulous advantage of a time of famine in commodities.

No wonder the Psalm ends that such a man should never be moved.

Someone said to the late George Vicesimus Wigram, a man of saintly life, that in heaven there would be no gentlemen. "On the contrary," he replied, "they will all be gentlemen there." And if all gentlemen there, why not all gentlemen here? It all comes back to God's will being done in earth as it is in heaven. That is the secret of the only true New World Order.

A son of mine, when very young, was reading the Bible, and said to me, "Was not the Apostle Paul a great

gentleman?" Indeed he was. The grace of God brought this about, as He would do with every one of us.

God's gentlemen will not be unmanly or soft, but will stand for truth unswervingly, yet will do so with gentleness and graciousness. "Thy gentleness hath made me

great" (Psalm 18: 35). The writer has in mind one, now with the Lord, who was at once the most gracious of men, and yet at the same time most firm in his upholding of divine principles and right conduct. He was one who could be very happily described by Psalm 15. May we all aim at answering to this description.

## THE SPIRIT AS SEAL AND EARNEST.

J. HOUSTON

**S**PEAKING of Gentiles, the Apostle said: "In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1: 13, 14). Thus we have the Spirit presented as seal and earnest in these verses.

As seal, He is not only security, but a mark of divine acceptance and complacency. An owner seals his purchase, often with his name, sometimes with other conventional mark of ownership, and this, if things are right, with satisfaction and complacency. It is just as if he said, "I have bought this for my own use; I place my name upon it, for it is mine. I have real pleasure in possessing it." Since the buying was an act of his own will, involving choice and price, we can understand how complacency follows as a natural result, unless he has made a mistake. The purchase of the Church at no less a cost than the blood of Christ, is for God's

ownership and satisfaction, and He never makes a mistake. Having secured it, God seals it with the Holy Spirit, as mark that He owns it, and that it gives Him pleasure.

Christ was sealed with the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 3: 16, 17). He refers to this when He said: "Him hath God, the Father, sealed" (John 6: 27). Coming out of Jordan's waters, in which He was baptized, He was owned by God, the Father, in these words: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Ownership in a divine, eternal relationship is acknowledged, in that He said, "This is **My beloved Son.**" Complacency is expressed by the words, "**In whom I am well pleased.**" Sealing, then, is in connection with ownership and complacency.

In the case of the Church, we can carry the same thought, only the Church had to be purchased before it could be owned. Christ was **eternally** God's Son. At no time was He brought into this relationship, being eternally in it. Until the Church was purchased, God's ownership of it did not exist in fact, though it did exist in purpose. Hence He seals it after it is bought,

and not before that great transaction. He seals a purchased Church. Striking thought! This is clearly seen in Acts 20: 28, where it is said, "The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood [or, the blood of His Own]." In this way, ownership is acknowledged by God, and he gives the Holy Spirit as the seal of the purchased possession. Complacency, of course, is acknowledged, the seal carrying with it this thought.

As Earnest, the Spirit is the absolute assurance of all that is to be inherited. If we have the Spirit as Earnest from God, we have the pledge of the thing, whatever it be, that is to be inherited, and this in the most absolute way. It could not be otherwise, since the Holy Spirit is God, a divine Person.

Strange ideas have been expressed about the Spirit as Earnest. Some have said it is only a token of the inheritance that has to be possessed. Eshcol's grapes are held up as an illustration of it. These grapes were not **all** that was in the promised land, but simply a **sample** of what was there, the inference being, the Spirit is but a sample of what the Church is going to inherit in a coming day. It goes without saying that this puts a very human limit to the greatness of a **divine** Person. Why should He only be a **sample** of that which He is both Creator and Giver?

Others have referred to the earnest that employers give employees when they enter into a contract of employment. The employer engages the employee, and in token of agreement made, he gives him the earnest which in times past, used to be a coin, often

a shilling. This sealed the contract. But all such illustrations should be used with reserve, pointing out that they fall far short of the reality.

We cannot speak of the Spirit in this way. He is not a mere token of something that has to be possessed. Nor is He the token of an agreement made. He is a divine Person, equal in power and glory to God, the Father, and the Son. Far from being **less** than the inheritance, He is greater, of necessity, for He is God, the Spirit. Therefore, to be indwelt by a divine Person is far greater than something that has simply to be possessed, however high and glorious this may be.

On account of our limitation and human weakness, we may enjoy very little of the inheritance, though indwelt by the Spirit who is greater than the inheritance; but this has to do with **our state**, and not the **Spirit's competency** to reveal all, and give us the enjoyment of all, were we able to receive it. We have neither the capacity, nor the power, to enjoy all now, though we possess the Spirit who could give us all. What an incentive this ought to be for us to live and walk in the Spirit, so that He might be unhindered in His gracious operations, in making known to us the glory of the Father and the Son! Paul speaks of having been in the third heaven. What exalted heights he reached in the Spirit! How extraordinary must have been his experience! And if we cannot rise to this, we should aim, at least, at getting as much of heaven now as we possibly can, since we possess the Holy Spirit of God who has the power to reveal to us all the things of Christ, who is exalted in the heavens.

# THE SOLITARY ONE.

J. G. BELLETT

**YOU** have observed, perhaps, how the Lord in John's Gospel acts on the ground of this, that the world had not known Him, and Israel had not received Him, according to Chapter I: 10, 11.

It is a matter of great interest to see this, how simply and yet how distinctly and fully He acts on these great facts; how He turns, as it were, away from both the world and Israel, and, as the Son, imparts Himself and His life to sinners who would (though the world and Israel had thus refused Him) receive Him in His grace as Son of God.

He is seen as a solitary One in the course of the first chapter: but in His solitude He is "the Lamb of God," i.e., in the character and plan of imparting life to all who seek Him as sinners, and being sought and found in that character, He promises the Kingdom to those who become associated with Him (I: 51).

These are fine witnesses of what I am speaking of. Jesus has done with the world and Israel. He takes His separated place, but it is the separated place of Him who can give life and a Kingdom to sinners.

So in chapter 2 He refuses the world. He refuses to shine in the eyes of man, according to the desires of the mother. But while he does so, He is seen opening His glories in the sight of His disciples (verse 11). He is the separated One, but His separation tells who He is, and that He has divine virtues and powers to impart or display.

In the third chapter, He has His face again turned away from the world. He would not yield to the flattering approaches of Nicodemus, any more than to the worldly suggestions of the mother, but taking a place apart from all that, He shows that it is the place of the life-giving Son of God.

In chapter 4, He has His back turned upon Israel. He knows them not, nor recognises them in their place or rights at all. He has done with the world, but He opens the river of God in His separated place. If separated from the world of Israel, it is to give life to all who would receive Him or come to Him in His separated place.

Just so in chapter 5. He is cancelling the prerogatives of Israel, but this is only that He may introduce Himself in all His life-giving virtue to the needy and helpless.

So in chapter 6. He will not be a King. He is a Stranger in the world and done with the world, giving up all expectations from it, will not even be sought or desired as a patron or worker of miracles, or as One that has power and resources for this world and this life. But He presents Himself as the help and eternal life of poor dead and ruined children of men, as the One in whom, and in whom alone, they can be saved.

And, not to pursue this further, in chapter 7, you find the two things again strikingly exhibited. In the opening of the chapter you see Him with this character and firmest decision turning His back upon the

world; and then at the close of it, in some of the most precious features of it, unfolding His Person as the Son of God in the separated place. He will not go up to the feast to show Himself to the world, as His brethren desired, but being separated He reveals Himself as the Source of the river of God, the Imparter of the Holy Ghost to all who would follow Him by faith, and meet Him in His separated place and character.

Very fine this way, this picture of the Son of God is. He is apart from the world because "the world knew Him not;" He is apart from Israel or His own, because "His own received Him not," but in the separated place He is the Son of

God, in conscious divine glory, imparting healing, life, the indwelling Spirit and the Kingdom, to all "who received Him."

How has He, beloved, the pre-eminence in all things! Yea, and in a great sense, not only the pre-eminence, but the character of glory in which He is and must be **alone**.

You and I are to be separated from the world as Jesus was, but we are separated to the place of **saints** merely, while He is separated to the place of **the Son**. We are separated from the world and from Israel, that we may **walk in the power of heavenly citizenship**; He is separated that He may **impart the life and the rights of heaven**.

## BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

### CHAPTER I: 1-12.

**T**HE book which is now to occupy our thoughts has certain very definite characteristics. It is the one book of the New Testament which calls itself a "prophecy," and in which the final victory of the Divine will and purpose is clearly seen. The very word for victory, though more often translated by overcome or prevail, occurs in it nearly as often as in the rest of the New Testament put together. It was evidently written when the first century was drawing to a close; when, as the Gospel and Epistles of John show, false and even antichristian teachers were beginning to abound, and when as a consequence true-hearted saints might well have had dejection and a feeling of defeat

creeping over them. How fitting then that a book portraying the final victory should be given to close the inspired record. Other distinctive features will come to light as we proceed.

It is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him," that is, the unveiling of things to come, for the simple meaning of revelation or apocalypse is unveiling. It is of course true that the unveiling of these future things all hinges on the unveiling or revelation of Jesus Christ in His glory, but the primary meaning is that God gave to Jesus this revelation of things to come that He might show it to His servants. Every clause of this first verse is worthy of careful notice.

It is remarkable, in the first place, that the revelation should be spoken of as **given to Jesus**, rather than as originated by Him. He is presented then as the servant of God's will and purpose just as He is in the Gospel of Mark, and it is in that Gospel that we find the passage in which He disowns knowledge of the day and hour of His advent. Here, too, He is the Servant of God to make known things to come as they had been given to Him. Moreover John, who received from Him the revelation, speaks of Himself not as an Apostle but as a servant, and those to whom it is conveyed are not spoken of as saints but as servants. It was a day when defection was becoming pronounced, so while there are messages to churches—which reveal the defection—the revelation is given to those who really are servants of God, and who therefore will appreciate it. It is a fact that remains to this day that men who are but unconverted professors of Christ universally decry, if they do not ridicule it; and worldly-minded believers make nothing of it.

Another remarkable feature is the indirectness of the revelation. God gave it to Jesus, and Jesus signified it to John, not directly but by mediation of His angel. Moreover He did not declare it: He "signified" it. In the Gospel John uses the word "sign" for miracle. Here it is a verb formed from the same root. He signed these things to John; and this exactly gives us the character of the book. The prophecy is conveyed not in plain literal speech as elsewhere, but in symbols or signs. Now all this is surely intended to make us feel that there is reserve and distance in the

method of revelation, suited to the sad defection that had already begun in the church. How different the method of those revelations made earlier to Paul, as for instance Acts 26: 16-18; 2 Corinthians 12: 1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17.

The things signified are such as "must shortly come to pass." This expression helps to establish the fact that the messages to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 have a prophetic bearing. What was signified by the church at Ephesus was beginning to come to pass when John received the prophecy, which carries us right on to the coming of the Lord, and even to the eternal state. The reader is also admonished by this expression that he must not adopt the attitude taken by the Jews when they received the prophecies of Ezekiel. Then they said, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off" (Ezek. 12: 27). It is an inveterate tendency of our hearts to avoid the force of the Word of God, not by denying it but by relegating it to so distant a future that it can conveniently be ignored.

Having received the revelation John bare record of it, and he describes it in a threefold way. It is "the word of God," and this fact at once invests the book with full authority and puts it on a par with the other Holy Writings. Then it is "the testimony of Jesus Christ," and later we are told that this testimony is "the spirit of prophecy" (19:10). This testimony declares that the Jesus, who suffered and was set at nought here, is the coming Lord of all things in heaven and on earth, and that all might and dominion, power and glory is in His

hands. He will execute judgment and bring to pass all the counsel of God. Now this is the spirit of prophecy. As we survey the prophetic field a great drama unfolds before our eyes, and we see beasts and Babylon and other anti-christian forces, but if we do not see them in relation to the testimony of Jesus we shall miss their real instruction and power. In the third place he speaks of "all things that he saw," for the revelation reached him in the form of visions. The words, "And I saw," or "And I looked," occur very frequently in the book.

Then a special blessing is pronounced on the reader, the hearer and the keeper of the words of the prophecy. Let us particularly note that we are to keep—that is, observe—these things. This indicates that the prophecy is to exert a powerful influence upon us. It is to enlighten our minds and guide our footsteps. The main point is not that we should be able to explain with accuracy every symbol used, or identify with certainty every "beast" or "locust," but that we should realize how all these actors in the sad drama of man's rebellion and judgment are like a dark background for the glory of the coming Lord, and that all is to lead to the separation of our hearts from this present evil age. In this way we shall "keep" the things that are written.

John addresses the book to the seven churches in Asia, as verse 4 says. In these seven churches all church history was portrayed, as chapters 2 and 3 show; we may therefore accept the book as addressed to the whole church during the centuries of its sojourn in

this world, and appropriate to the whole church the grace and peace of this opening salutation.

The grace and peace proceed from the three Persons of the Godhead, but each of the three is presented in a way that differs from the rest of the New Testament. First we have God in His unchanging greatness; eternally and immutably He IS, and therefore as regards the past, He was, and as regards the future, He is to come. He sits therefore above the storms that in this book we are to see raging on the earth, and even in the heavens.

The second Person named here is the Holy Spirit. He is not presented as the one Spirit of the Epistles but as "the seven Spirits," an allusion, we suppose, to Isaiah 11: 2. In our verse they are "before His throne," as being ready to act in the government of the earth. The Spirit is one as to His Person, and this fact is greatly emphasized in connection with the formation of the church, and his activities therein, as we see in 1 Corinthians 12. Yet in His governmental activities He is viewed in a sevenfold way, and the final actions of Divine government are contemplated in this last book of the Bible.

In the third place grace and peace proceed from Jesus Christ, who is presented in a threefold way. He is the faithful Witness in contrast to all others who have borne witness of God. They have each and all failed somewhere. In Him God himself has been perfectly declared, and all truth maintained in full integrity. In considering Him thus, our thoughts have mainly to travel into the past.

But He is also the First Begotten of the dead, and it is this that characterizes Him at the present moment. The church is based upon Him as risen from the dead. Indeed, it was not until He was risen and ascended that the Holy Ghost was shed forth so that the church might be formed. Then thirdly, He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. He is this in title at the present moment, but He will not publicly assume that place until His second advent, so that considering Him thus our thoughts travel to the future. How comprehensively then—past, present and future—is He set before us. All this He is, and all this He would be, even if no soul of man had received salvation through Him.

But we have received eternal blessing through Him, and hence we know Him in a very intimate way which calls forth an outburst of praise. He loves us and has declared that abiding fact firstly in a work of purification, washing us from our sins in His own blood, and then in a work of exaltation, making us kings and priests to His God and Father. Only as washed from our sins could we be introduced into such a place as that, and it is worthy of note that directly we have **Christian blessings** mentioned we have God presented in **the light in which we know Him**—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—rather than as the eternal I AM, as in verse 4.

To such an One as this, known through grace, we heartily ascribe the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Glory and domination have ever been pursued by fallen men. Not one of them has been worthy

to receive it, and if in any measure they have attained to it, nothing but oppression has resulted for the masses, and ultimately disaster for themselves. Here at last is One worthy to have it, and wield it to the glory of God and the blessing of men—worthy by reason of who He is as well as what He has done. It is remarkable that we have exactly the same words in 1 Peter 5: 11. What is there ascribed to “the God of all grace” is here ascribed to Jesus Christ: pretty clear proof, this, of WHO He really is.

Verse 7 gives us in very small compass the main theme of the book. The consummation is announced before we see the steps that lead up to it. The same feature characterizes many of the Psalms in the Old Testament. The public and glorious appearing of Christ will bring everything to a head. Every eye shall see Him in surroundings that indicate His Deity, for it is Jehovah, “who maketh the clouds His chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind” (Psa. 104: 3). Zechariah had declared, “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced” (12: 10), and this shall be fulfilled. He had also declared that there should be those of Israel who should see then the enormity of their national sin in His rejection, and mourn for it in deep repentance. Our verse here announces that all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him; not in repentance evidently, but because it seals their doom, and they realize it. Plain proof, this that the world is not going to be converted as the preparation for His coming.

The correct reading in verse 8 appears to be “Lord God,” and not

“ Lord ” only. This being so, we hear in the verse the voice of the Lord God Almighty, the eternally existent One, who guarantees the fulfilment of the Advent in its appointed time. Jesus Christ is viewed, as we have pointed out, as the holy and perfect Servant of His glory; the exalted Man, by whom He will administer the world in righteousness. Nothing can possibly defeat One who is the Beginning and the End of all things.

Thus far we have had what we may call the preface. From verse 9 to the end of the chapter we have John's account of the vision of the Lord that was granted to him, out of which sprang the writing of this book. In recounting it, he does not present himself as an Apostle, but as a brother of those to whom he wrote and as a sharer in their present trials and future prospects. This is the time marked by tribulation for the saints below, and of patience for Christ glorified on high. He waits in patience for the hour to strike when the Kingdom will be His. We are called to enter into that same patience, as we shall see when we read verse 10 of chapter 3, and as the Apostle Paul indicated in 2 Thessalonians 3: 5.

At that time John was suffering the tribulation that is involved in isolation. Banished to Patmos, he was cut off from his fellow-believers, yet he was in no way isolated from His Lord. On a certain first day of the week, which is the Lord's Day, he was carried outside himself by the special energy of the Holy Spirit of God, and so he was brought into a condition in which he was enabled to see and hear heavenly things. It is well for us to remember that

though we have never needed, and therefore never come under such a special action of the Spirit, yet it is only by the ordinary action and energy of the Spirit that we discern and apprehend anything of the things of God.

He tells us first what he heard. A powerful voice of authority bade him write the things he was about to see in a book, and send it to seven selected churches in the Province of Asia. John was thus constituted a Seer. He was also told that it was the Divine intention that the revelation he was now to receive should be **enshrined in a Book**. In their eagerness to get rid of a written revelation from God, men decry the Scriptures and accuse of “ Bibliolatry ” those of us who accept the Bible and reverence it as the Word of God. They would like us to regard a book revelation as something quite beneath the Divine dignity. We, on the contrary, regard it as exactly suitable to His dealings with men whom He has endowed with powers of reading and writing, and who have learned to hand on knowledge from one generation to another by means of books. The seven churches were to have the book, and that which they symbolized—the whole church throughout the centuries until the Lord comes—was to have it too.

The seven churches, whether we view them historically or prophetically, differed widely in their character and state, yet the same revelation of things to come would be salutary for each. Let those who decry the study of prophecy note this! Whatever our spiritual state as individuals may be, it will be for

our health and blessing if we gain a clear understanding of the solemn scenes of judgment by which God is going to bring earth's sad story to a triumphant conclusion.

Hearing this trumpet voice of authority, John turned to see the

majestic Person who uttered it, and thus was he brought face to face with his Lord, and granted a sight of the One he had once known so well on earth, but now displayed in a character and amidst circumstances that to him were entirely new.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." (Heb. 6: 4-6). From this it would appear that there was no hope for a backslider. Can you explain the above verse?—GLASGOW.

The conclusion you draw from these solemn verses is entirely correct. Renewal unto repentance for such backsliders as are considered in this passage is not said to be "improbable," but "impossible." But then not all backsliders are of this sort.

The context of these verses makes plain the type that is contemplated. In the closing verses of chapter 5 the writer has to upbraid those whom he addressed because they were stunted in spiritual growth. They were but babes, when they should have developed into men of understanding. In the opening verse of chapter 6 he exhorts them to leave "the word of the beginning of Christ," as it more literally is, and "go on unto perfection;" that is, go on to the full faith of Christ, that has been made known through the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven as the result of Christ being glorified. A good deal of light is shed on this by Acts 21: 20. There we read of thousands of Jews taking the place of believers, and yet being "all zealous of the law." Now it is

evident that if thousands who profess faith in Christ are zealous, not of Christ but of the law, there is something very defective with them, if not positively wrong.

Now where there exists such a state as this amongst thousands of Hebrews, there will almost certainly be found some who have been carried along in the stream without the new birth being effective within them. They would be like the many who believed in the name of Christ when He was on earth, but to whom Jesus did not commit Himself, since He knew what was in man, and He did not believe them. (See John 2: 23-25). In the next chapter we see Nicodemus coming to Jesus, and to him the Lord speaks of the new birth, the great necessity whether for him or these other men.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is warning people of this stamp that for them to backslide from their professed faith in Christ would mean their return to Judaism, and reinstatement in the synagogue would not be granted them unless they "crucify to themselves the Son

of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." **Having done THAT**, a renewal unto repentance would be impossible and their doom would be fixed.

If you find it difficult to reconcile the things stated in verses 4 and 5 with a person being no true Christian, it may help you to think of Judas Iscariot. He was enlightened; he tasted of God's heavenly gift in the presence of His Son on earth. He tasted the good word of God from the lips of the Saviour, and evidently shared with the other disciples the privilege of wielding the powers of the world to come in the way of miraculous healings and power over evil spirits. We could not say he was made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, since He was not then present on earth, save in the modified sense that Christ being on earth the fulness of the Spirit was present in Him. Still he did partake in this modified sense. In all these benefits he had his part, and yet he lent himself to the crucifixion of the Son of God, and proved himself after all to be but a "son of perdition."

Hebrews 6, then, is a warning against backsliding of so bad a sort that it is virtually apostasy; that is, a total abandonment of the faith of Christ, from which there is no recovery. Besides this, there is of course the backsliding of a very common type, which consists of making profession of conversion without reality, and then lapsing from it back into the world. Such cases are sadly familiar to us, and probably also we know cases where after a false start real conversion has taken place. There is also that type of backsliding which consists in a really converted person becoming cold and worldly with its accompanying evils. A backslider of this kind is contemplated in 2 Peter 1: 9, and Peter himself is an example of it. He did indeed lack the virtues enumerated; he was indeed blind and short-sighted when he blundered into the court of the high priest; and when he denied his Lord with oaths and curses, he had forgotten that from these old sins of his he had been purged.

But these other cases must not be confused with what is before us in Hebrews 6.

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## Living and Powerful.

The Book lives amongst us—old, but not antiqued, venerable on account of its age; powerful in never-failing youth and vigour. The echo of David's voice is still heard in the chambers of meditation and prayer; the counsel of Solomon's wisdom and experience is still aiding the wanderer in the complicated paths of life; young Timothy is still taught from his very childhood out of these hallowed pages; the Apostle Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, is still unfolding to us the whole counsel of God; whilst the beloved disciple, in fulfilment of the Lord's prediction, still tarries with us, and lifts us up, as on eagle's wings, to adore the Eternal Son, and to wait for His return.

# THE FAMILY OF GOD.

D. Ross

Notes of an Address on JOHN I: 11-13; 20: 17;  
ROMANS 8: 14-17, 19; I; JOHN 3: 1, 2.

**O**UR subject on this occasion is the family of God. When we speak about the family and the children, at once there flashes through our minds the thought of God as Father. That thought is not entirely confined to the New Testament: in fact, even amongst Gentile nations like the Greeks and Romans, you get them speaking about their gods, Zeus or Jupiter, as being the father of other gods and of men. But that fatherhood was something crudely physical. I need not go into that. But in the Old Testament we find God speaking of the nation of Israel as His son, and speaking to the members of that race as His children, and in the prophecy of Isaiah they say, "Thou art our Father." But there is a very big difference between that and the wonderful revelation given to us in the Son when He declared to us the Father. With the Gentiles it was physical; with the Jews it was national; but now, when we come to Christianity, it is personal, spiritual and moral.

You take the first three Gospels and, when you get the thought of the Father and the children there, it is not something that is outward. The Jew believed that because he happened to be born of Israel's seed therefore he was a child of God. It had nothing to do with his spiritual condition; nothing to do with his character or duty, but simply with the circumstance of his ancestry. The family that the New Testament speaks of has nothing to do with

that. It is not of blood. It is a strange thing that this fact needs to be emphasized today. There are people who want to divide the human race into different categories of blood and soil. They regard those belonging to certain races as being in peculiar relationship with God. Then there are others who think they have elevated themselves to a peculiar position by the will of the flesh, by culture, education. It has nothing to do with that. It is not by the will of man. This revelation of God as Father is individual, personal, something absolutely new, revealed to us in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at the Old Testament. There God revealed Himself to Abraham as the Almighty. "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Has God in our day ceased to be the Almighty? Thank God, no. Our Father is the Almighty God. Then later, when God took up a people, He revealed Himself as Jehovah, the covenant-keeping, eternal, ever existing One, the "I am that I am." And has He ceased to be that to us? No. The One who is our Father, revealed in Jesus Christ the Son, is the eternal Jehovah. But now we come to John's Gospel particularly, and we have the Father revealed in a unique way through the Son. When you get the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship in the first three Gospels, it is connected with the fulfilment of the Messianic hopes of Israel, but when you come to John you have

left these things behind. The Son, who ever dwells in the bosom of the Father, is come into the world, and He speaks of "MY Father."

We sometimes say that John's Gospel is the one that reveals to us Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Well, I was looking up my concordance, and I found that if Jesus as Son of God is mentioned 30 times the Father is mentioned 120 times. Did you ever realize that? The purpose for which Jesus came into the world was not only to save sinners. Thank God! He did that. Not only to undo the works of the devil did He come, but, oh think of this! the eternal Son of the Father came into the world to make God known as He knew Him. And we see how it came to pass. In John 1:14, it says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." The disciples could not live for long in His presence without realizing that there was Another in whose presence He lived, and that Other was the Father. So He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

You will notice that in John's Gospel the expression, "Your Father," only occurs once, whereas it is frequent in the other Gospels. For instance, "Your Father which is in heaven," occurs a number of times in the Sermon on the Mount. How different from the heathen ideas that were prevalent in those days and which are being revived today. I sit and listen to professors in our universities teaching Pantheism—that God is everywhere, that He is immanent in nature and

that is all. But, "Your Father which is in heaven," tells us that though immanent in all things, He is transcendent. We do not want Pantheism, nor do we want Theism; that is, admitting a God, but One who has no means of revealing Himself, so that we may enter into living fellowship with Him. He is supposed to dwell wholly apart. But He does not. The Son has revealed Him in time, and to what end? John's Epistle tells us that He came to bring us into living association, into fellowship. The Apostle entered into fellowship with the Father and the Son, and he wrote both Gospel and Epistles in order that we might enter that fellowship too. Have we got so accustomed to hearing this that we do not realize the magnitude and magnificence of the revelation?

I was hearing somewhere not long ago the story of how some of the early converts from heathenism were helping to translate John 1, and they came to the truth that they were children of God, and even sons of God, and they were staggered. They held up their hands and said, "No, we cannot write that. Let us rather write this, 'They shall be permitted to kiss His feet.'" But this is not what God wanted. He desired to have us in His presence as children, able to enter into His thoughts and enjoy His love; children not servants; sons not slaves. The link between us is not ritualistic, but a living vital link—children.

How did we become children? John uses several words. We are "born," "begotten of God." What does that signify? Here is the communication to us of a new life and nature; something infinitely

mysterious. We are told the agency: "born of the Spirit," born of "incorruptible seed," even "by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Life has been communicated to us, a life that death cannot touch because the seed of which we are born is incorruptible and involves a relationship that will never end. All other relationships shall cease. Death will break the tie, but those who are born of God have a life that is perfect and shall abide. In his Epistle John speaks of our being begotten of God and that now we are "of God," which is a permanent condition. That indicates the correspondence existing between the Source and its issue, between God, the Originator of that life, and those who are born of Him. We find also that there are children of the devil, the father of lies, and they correspond to him. As born of God, His children have certain characteristics. Let us look at some of them.

The power or right to become the children of God is given to "them that believe on His name." Says John in his Epistle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." The first mark is **faith**, and that is not a mark that you have on the day of your conversion and then cease to have for the rest of your life. You live by faith. What is another characteristic? Your Father is absolutely righteous, and therefore, "Ye know that everyone that doeth **righteousness** is born of Him." Now let us ask ourselves, Are we merely calling ourselves children of God, or are we children of God?

Calling a thing by a certain name does not make it that. President

Abraham Lincoln showed this one day when a deputation came to him to answer for a certain course of conduct. With his clever original mind he saw their ruse, and said, "Gentlemen, if we were to call a sheep's tail its leg, how many legs would it have?" They promptly replied, "Five." He said, "You are wrong. It would only have four." Calling a tail a leg does not make it a leg. So now let us test ourselves. Do we practise righteousness? Does it characterize us? If not, we shall not make ourselves the children of God by calling ourselves that.

There is faith and there is righteousness. And what else? Your Father is **love**. Ah, there will be in this a marked correspondence between the children and the Father. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." **Love** is the principal characteristic of those who are the children of God. But saying that you love your brethren is not enough. Hence the exhortation, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

And a fourth characteristic is, "He that **doeth good** is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John 11). This life is active and results in beneficence. That was a characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ. He went about doing good for God was with Him. Have you got the marks of your Father upon you?

Now listen to another characteristic. "Whatsoever is born of God **overcometh** the world." You see a man and he says, "I am a child of God." I have known one speak

thus and he was lying drunk on his bed. Was he a child of God? God knows: I would not like to say, but certainly he had not the marks of one. The child of God has the faith which gets the victory. Such are not baffled, beaten, overcome creatures, but pass through the world overcoming in the glorious Name of Christ, the Son of God, who overcame the world.

Then again, John says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." And what are you? What am I? Children of God, and therefore **children of light**, children of the day. What does Paul say? "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights." (Phil 2: 15). We are light, but can we say that in us is no darkness at all? The sun is light, but there are great, mysterious things on its surface called sun spots, so you cannot say that in it is no darkness at all. Are there not some dark and ugly spots in us? Murmurings, disputings, which are harmful, blame-worthy, a reproach against us? We are not true children of God in this, nor if we shine in order that men, seeing our good works, may glorify us. Not that, but, "glorify your Father, which is in heaven." Have we the characteristic of being children of light and shining as light in the world?

What is another mark? **Truth**. He that is born of God recognizes it. John says, "He that knoweth God heareth us." The child of God knows truth when he hears it, and so can detect the lie. Hence there is no necessity for even the young Christian to be led into heresy and

error. The Spirit of God, the Unction from the Holy One, is within us, and we know all things. Does that mean that a babe in the family of God knows as much of the doctrines of Christianity as the aged and experienced believer? No: but there is within him the ability to recognize the truth and say, "That is the Word of God;" and to repudiate the lie of the devil, because he himself is born of God and possesses the Spirit of God.

Then another characteristic much needed today. One might almost imagine by the way some people act that there was a special blessing on peace-breakers, but Jesus said, "Blessed are the **peacemakers**: for they shall be called 'the children of God.'" Peace is a very elusive factor. Some people say, "I did not want to break the peace but other people insisted on doing so." But we are to seek peace, and pursue it and make it. Then we shall be called the children of God; that is, it will be manifest, even to the worldling, that we are truly children of the God of peace.

One might mention more of these characteristics, but let that suffice. Yet there is another thought involved, which is exemplified in our Lord. When about to be utterly forsaken by His followers, He said, "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Bethsaida, Chorazin, Capernaum all slammed their doors in His face, and what did He do? He retreated into the presence of the Father, saying, "Father, I thank Thee." When you get to my time of life, this one you were brought up with dies, and that one is alienated, another takes offence, another goes elsewhere, and if you have any

sensitiveness you feel alone. But you never **are** alone, or an orphan. You have always the Father, the hearth-side and the home. And suppose all whom you have loved have been swept away, do not seek too much for friendships on earth, but cultivate the knowledge of the Father's name. Live there. You will never lose that Father, who has an infinite, tender care for you.

Do not be anxious, therefore, thinking what you will eat and what you will drink and wherewithal you will be clothed. Your Heavenly Father knoweth the things you have need of, and He cares. Are you unduly worried because your brethren do not show love toward you? Remember you are never exhorted to expect love from them; you are exhorted to show it. Seek the presence of the Father and know that He loves you with a love that will never know change.

But He not only cares enough for you to provide for all your needs; He cares enough for you to chasten you when you are going the wrong road, and that is what we get in Hebrews 12. He tells us not to faint when chastening comes upon us. A father that neglects chastening is not doing his duty. But please do not make a mistake; this chastening does not mean chastising, but rather the rearing and training of the child. Often a father has to say, No. Perhaps the Father has to lay me aside. Well, if we are called to pass through discipline—that is the better word—let us take it from the Father's hand. Do not be downcast, and do not be defiant, but be exercised thereby, and then will it produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Then, once more, what does the Father want? He wants communion. Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Communion with the Father. You know, it is a beautiful thing when a father has so disciplined his children, has so laboured and cared for them, that the time comes when they unbosom their minds to him, and sit and listen to him. It is a sad situation when a son regards his father as a kind of bogey, and there are people who almost view God in that light. God desires to make His abode with you and commune with you. Will that mean lack of reverence? No. It was Dr. Wolston who used to say, "It is a good thing to know God as our Father, and it is always well to remember that our Father is God."

And then lastly, John never uses the word for **sons** but for **children**. This shows that there is in us that definite principle—the seed of God—and that it is active to produce growth, working up to maturity. Paul uses the word for son or "adoption," emphasizing the place of dignity and privilege which is ours. Three times over he uses the word. In Ephesians it is linked with His purpose: He has predestinated us to sonship. In Galatians it is connected with the redemptive work of the Son. We are brought out of the bondage of Judaism into sonship, so are no longer in a place of servitude. Also we have the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts so that we cry, "Abba Father."

Then thirdly in Romans 8 we read how the whole creation is groaning,

waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. For that we wait, and not for a pact between the nations or for a disarmament convention. When He shall be manifested then we shall be like Him and manifested with Him. That will be the fulfilment of

the Father's purpose for His children, His sons, and the consummation of our blessedness. Conformed to the image of His dear Son, we shall for ever be children, sons before the Father for His eternal pleasure.

## TWO SUPREME TESTS.

A. J. POLLOCK

**WE** refer to the first and second comings of our Lord to this earth. One has taken place and passed into history; the other is yet to take place. But we are not left in doubt as to what will be the result upon man of His second coming, for prophecy is simply history foretold. God alone can unfold the distant future.

It stands to reason that the advent into this world of one of the Persons of the Godhead must be a matter of supreme importance. The eternal Son of God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead, appeared in this world, taking upon Himself manhood. In the nature of things there could not be a greater test than this. How did men react to this great test?

Oftentimes we seek to do right things in a wrong way. In trying to gain the ear of someone opposed to us, we often tactlessly cut off their ears. But in the case of our Lord there was a perfect approach to man. He made no mistakes in His manner in dealing with men. Note His patience under the most trying circumstances. By common consent His was the most wonderful human life ever lived upon this earth. Even sceptics burst into lyrics when they

speak of that life of lives. Think of it, a brief time of public service, three-and-a-half short years, and it was all over, a young Man ending His life on earth at a time when most young men are at the beginning of their career. The whole of the civilised world pays unconscious homage to Him when they date their laws and letters by the number of years since His birth took place in a stable in Bethlehem.

What was His testimony? To the love of God, to His righteousness, to the sinfulness of sinners, to Himself as the One to be crucified and to rise the third day. The common people heard Him gladly. They wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His lips. He went about doing good. He healed the sick, the blind, the deaf, the lame, the loathsome leper. He even raised the dead.

What kind of reception should we expect Him to receive? Breaking no law of the land, doing nothing but good night and day, one would expect Israel's High Priests and rulers would have acclaimed Him with delight. Did they? We know that it was the religious classes that were most opposed. They continually plotted for His life. Only the restraining hand of God pre-

vented the carrying out of their sinister plots again and again. They were ready at every moment to kill the One, who told them the truth. Not till His hour came were they allowed to carry out their foul designs.

These High Priests were ready enough to furnish thirty pieces of silver to induce a wretched traitor to betray his Lord. They crucified Him. That was man's answer to the first great, supreme test God put upon man. Language fails to express the utterly polluted and perverted nature of man's mind; capable of such a crime, that even Pontius Pilate was amazed at the fanatical cry of the High Priests and rulers, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Weakly did the Roman Governor ask, "Why, what evil hath He done?" But their fierce religious fanaticism overrode everything.

If man's side of the cross is man's greatest condemnation, on the Divine side there shines with ineffable splendour the amazing love of God, who gave His Son, that in obedience to His will He might lay down His life, bearing the judgment of God against sin, and thus open the very gates of Heaven to the vilest of mankind, who repents and believes the Gospel of the grace of God.

The coming of their Messiah was ever the expectation of the Jews. But the cross was to them a stumblingblock. They wanted a King who would reign in power, cover their nation with a glory far beyond that of Solomon's, putting them at the very head of all the nations of the earth.

But when that day does come, how will the nation respond to the

supreme test? The test is coming. We know that from Scripture. There will be the personal reign of our Lord in power and glory for a thousand years. The real New World Order will come at last.

At present men are seeking this, but they miss out the Central Figure who alone can bring it about. They are seeking to follow a will-o'-the-wisp, an *ignis fatuus*. They are seeking to form a wheel without a hub, to get a circumference without a centre. They are seeking what to man's puny efforts is the impossible.

But when our Lord comes to reign over His ancient people as their King and Messiah, and over the wide world as the Son of Man, it will be said, "And they shall teach no more 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, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31: 34). In that day, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. 2: 14). What a glorious day for the world when a King shall reign in righteousness. Not as in His first coming in lowly grace, but in majesty, power, and righteousness shall the Lord reign. In that day Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of the world, and unto the Temple the nations shall flock in their multitudes. Surely an ideal condition of things.

As the Millennium proceeds population will enormously increase. Birth rate will be high. Death rate almost nil. With the absence of disease as we are familiar with it

today, with the absence too of the pests of the field, there will be peace and plenty in the world, and righteousness and truth will be the pillars of Jehovah's throne. One would have thought, an object lesson such as this being before the eyes of succeeding generations, that their hearts would have been convinced that here was the right and only proper method of government.

The thousand years' reign of Christ will be a wonderful time for this poor world, soaked in tears and saturated with blood as it is. A thousand years seems a long time to us, whose span of life is three score years and ten, but it is as a single day to God. The Millennium will come to an end. The loosing of Satan, who incites man to manifest himself, will in a very striking way indeed exemplify the absolute ineradicable evil of the flesh, that evil principle that comes from our connection with a fallen race. One might have argued that the beneficent reign of Christ would have convinced mankind of the advantage to the world of being governed by Divine principles, so that they would have showed their appreciation of the blessed epoch of Divine rule by seeking its continuance.

But no, Satan, loosed from the bottomless pit after being confined there for one thousand years, will find ready to his hand in mankind the pent-up spirit of revolt against the very reign of the Son of God. The nations of the four quarters of the earth will be gathered together in one last immense outbreak. We have been staggered by the immense armies of the present time, the frightful outpouring of life and treasure, reaching astronomical

figures, but the figures of the future and last revolt will outstrip present day figures beyond human realization.

On the breadth of the earth these vast hordes, this Satanic league of nations with evil intent, will encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city, seeking to stamp out what is of God on the face of the earth. Gog and Magog will be represented, the nation mentioned before the time of the Millennium, and the only nation mentioned after. May it be that, because of that nation's long persecution of the Jews, they will meet their final doom in view of the very walls of Jerusalem?

The crushing of this revolt is compressed into a few short words. The most terrific outpouring of God's judgment the world will ever see, is packed into a sentence. We read, "Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (Rev. 20: 9). Who can estimate what this means?

Meanwhile God is not defeated and the happy and blessed side of the Millennium will pass on for ever to the fixed eternal state, never to know an end. No positive description of that state is given, and if it were it would probably be beyond our understanding. The most that can be said about it is that all that brings discomfort and sorrow in this world because of sin will be conspicuous by its total absence—no pain, no tears, no crying, no sorrow, no death. Paul's experience in being caught up to the third heaven gives us an idea of how utterly it is beyond even Christian experiences in this life, for he heard things unlawful to utter on earth,

and in order to keep him humble after this experience he had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

To sum up. Every supreme test centres round our Lord Jesus Christ. The two supreme tests have been first connected with His coming in lowly grace into this world. They crucified Him. They cast Him out. The next supreme test will be when He comes in power and glory to reign, and, in spite of a thousand years' demonstration of the blessedness of this time, we find the Millennium ending in the most awful revolt ever staged against God.

On the **human** side the Millennium is disappointing even as our Lord's

first coming was, proving up to the hilt the terrible condition of man in the flesh, that nothing but a new nature and a propitiation for sin can save man. Nothing but repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ will meet the case.

On the **Divine** side how marvelous has been the first coming of our Lord, and how blessed are the consequences flowing therefrom. All the counsels of God will be gloriously fulfilled. Eternity will be vocal with the praises of Him, who died on the cross. Our Lord shall yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. God is not defeated, but shall yet be all in all.

## THE INCARNATION.

R. McCALLUM

MATTHEW 1: 18; 2: 15. LUKE 2: 1-20.

**O**VER nineteen hundred years ago, when Christ rode into Jerusalem in triumph, "all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" (Matt. 21: 10). It is a question which confronts every generation of men, and which loses none of its urgency or cogency with the passage of time. If we are wrong in our answer here, we are fatally wrong; and in the light of the Scriptures to which attention is directed above, our mistake is inexcusable. Differences of opinion on this fundamental subject do not turn on questions of evidence, for it may be said quite categorically that the evidence is all on the one side. The language of Scripture is unambiguous so that there can be no question of misinterpretation, nor have the scholars

offered any alternative readings to confuse the issue and render belief difficult. No—the Gospels unmistakably declare that Christ was born of a virgin and conceived of the Holy Ghost, and those who deny the Virgin Birth make no attempt to controvert the language of Scripture but they declare frankly that the story of a supernatural birth is repulsive to the modern mind.

It is sometimes said that the story of the miraculous birth of Christ is only found in two of the Gospels and that on this account it is not incumbent on us to accept it as essential to the Christian faith. This statement while essentially true is so handled as to be in fact a mis-statement of the truth. But we may well

ask, How often must truth be stated before it is true? God has chosen to give us two accounts of that astounding event, when one would have sufficed. Matthew and Luke are the only two Evangelists who deal at all with the birth or childhood of Christ, so that it would be true to say that both the Gospels dealing with His birth insist upon the Virgin Birth in the clearest possible terms. Moreover the opening sentence of the Gospel of Mark is, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and it is interesting to note that he makes no reference to the prevalent and popular but erroneous belief that He was the son of Joseph.

John in his Gospel twice makes mention of Christ as Joseph's son, stating the view currently expressed by men, but he immediately provides the necessary corrective to prelude its acceptance. In the first chapter we read, "Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." But almost immediately we hear Nathanael, convinced of the credentials of the Christ, declare, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." Who was there that knew better than John that Jesus was the Son of Mary? It was to his tender care that Christ committed His mother as He was hanging upon the cross; yet it is he who tells us that the design of his Gospel—the purpose for which it is written—is, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name." And if we do not have the record of His

unique birth in this Gospel, where else is there to be found such an exalted assurance of His pre-existence as in the early verses of the prologue, where the Deity of the One who took flesh and tabernacled amongst men is emphasized and reiterated, so that it is guarded against every misconception and misrepresentation except that of wilful unbelief.

Of Luke, that great Christian doctor and scholar, Howard A. Kelly, M.D., writes, "Luke, the first Christian doctor, his calling being much in evidence in the medical terms he so often uses, was a true scientist, saturated with the true spirit of his profession, careful and accurate as an investigator, and fully cognizant of the vital importance of the facts he was about to relate. He gives us, I believe, in his first forty-two words in the Greek, eighty-two in the English, without the slightest observable effort, the largest quantum of certainty and assurance ever expressed in any language. Let us pause for a moment that we may receive a deeper impression, as Luke proceeds to set forth in order a narrative—of things most surely believed among us—delivered over unto us—by eye-witnesses — from the beginning—ministers or servants of the word— It seemed good to me, too, having had a perfect understanding—of all things—from the first (meaning also, from above)—to write unto thee in order—most excellent Theophilus. Where, I submit, in the world can one find more simply and naturally stated a greater and more profitable assurance, as well as more competent testimony in a matter exceeding all other earthly interests in impor-

tance? Then, fearless as a scientist should ever be, Luke does not hesitate to begin his record with two well-ascertained miraculous events; namely, the birth of the Messiah, the Son of David, and that of His servant, John the Baptist."

One other quotation from this noted gynecologist will emphasize the importance of this question. "The Virgin Birth," he says, "is not, as some would have it, a mere question as to whether I, as a scientific man, may accept such a doctrine because no similar phenomenon has come within the experience of the human race in any authenticated instance. Indeed, if in rare occasional instances a virgin birth could be shown to have occurred, then the Scripture claim as to Christ's divine descent would at once lose all value."

Further, in an interesting little booklet, "A Doctor looks at the Bible," the late Professor Blair, formerly Regius Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow, writes, "Has it ever struck you that the only circumstantial account of the Virgin Birth of our Lord is found in the one Gospel written by a medical man? Luke goes into extraordinary detail. It is as though his professional instincts were aroused, and he said to himself, Here is a marvellous thing; it is my duty as a medical man to see that a careful record is made of all relevant details. Some of his details can only have been obtained either directly or indirectly from the mother of our Lord herself . . . . It is essential to recognize, without any equivocation whatever, the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to deny the Virgin Birth is the first step towards deny-

ing that Divinity."

The record of the Gospels is, for all who believe the Scriptures, the first and the sufficient ground for their conviction of this truth, reinforced as this is by such Old Testament predictions as, Genesis 3: 15; Isaiah 7: 14; Jeremiah 31: 22. But the facts of His life and work, and the truth of the Gospel, demand just such a birth—absolutely unique. For the Gospel is not merely an ethic, or a philosophy of life, or a programme for the reform of society. It is the good news that God has broken in upon the history of mankind in the Person of His Son, who was truly Man, yet verily God. Here is the amazing and inscrutable "Mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Only familiarity with the story has robbed us of the overwhelming feeling of amazement as we view the Babe in the manger, and recognize in Him, "God with us."

Incredible as it may seem, the denial of the Humanity of Christ was a prior heresy in the professing church to the denial of His Deity. Yet His Humanity is crucial to our salvation, for apart from this there could be no true identity between the Saviour and our sinning race. We rejoice that He has entered into all the experiences of mankind—**sin apart**. He was tempted; thirsted; suffered hunger and weariness; shed tears of true sympathy; felt poignantly the lack of interest and understanding in His friends—"Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Because of this He is qualified to be a faithful and merciful High Priest.

We are, however, much more in danger today of denying or weakening the Deity of Christ, and it is well

to remind ourselves of the many lines of evidence which substantiate the assertion of His Deity. The first cardinal fact to be kept in mind is the claim that He made for Himself. Other teachers have at all times emphasized the value of their teaching; Christ places the emphasis upon Himself. He claims not only to have a cure for man's ills, but He claims that He Himself is that cure. Listen to His words: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Again, only familiarity has dulled our sense of amazement as we hear Him say, "A greater than Solomon is here." "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "Before Abraham was, I am." We recognize that in a mere man such statements would be obnoxious egotism of the worst kind, but instead of discovering this, we feel instinctively that the claims are natural, right and congruous. And those who have responded to His call and put His claims to the test, have found Him to be all that He has claimed.

Another fact to be kept in mind is that neither friend nor foe could find fault or flaw in Him. He was

holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. We are all aware that the greatest saints have ever been most conscious of failure; most oppressed by a sense of sin. Paul speaks of himself as "less than the least of all saints," and "the chief of sinners." But while Christ teaches His disciples to pray for forgiveness, we never find Him praying thus for Himself. It is evident that we must place Him in a category not only different from all sinners, but different from all saints—alone in His holiness, unique in His glory.

His wisdom, His power, especially His power to forgive sins—not merely the pronouncement of absolution, but the bestowal of divine peace—His universal appeal, which overleaps the barriers of race, colour, social status, intellectual differences, and of every other kind, prove Him to have been more than man and truly God.

But if the Virgin Birth is rejected, how shall the Deity of Christ be sustained? To deny the Virgin Birth strikes at the very root of His Deity as well as of His Humanity, and robs Christ of His glory and power. By the marvel of the incarnation God was brought to man: by the glory of redemption is man brought to God.

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We have all, more or less, lost sight of the judgment exercised by the Lord in "His own house," and it is too frequently supposed that, because the salvation of a saint is a sure thing, God is indifferent about character here.

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# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTER I: 13—2: 7)

**T**HE Lord Jesus presented Himself to John as "like unto the Son of Man." This was not an unknown title to John, for Jesus in the days of His flesh spoke of Himself thus. What was new was the fact that the Son of Man had exchanged conditions of humiliation for surroundings of glory. John had just been instructed to write in a book what he saw, and this he faithfully carried out. In the course of this book he describes a great many things that passed before his vision, but all of them hinge on this first great vision of the Son of Man in His judicial glory. The Lord's own words were that the Father had given Him authority to execute judgment, "because He is the Son of Man" (John 5: 27).

The description given to us in verses 13-17 speaks entirely of judgment. John had once leant on Jesus' breast at supper, now that same breast is under restraint, girt about with a girdle of gold. The sight of His head was like unto that of "The Ancient of Days" of Daniel 7, in whose presence "the judgment was set, and the books were opened." The eye symbolizes intelligence and discernment, and His were as a flame of fire, not only discerning but also resolving all things into their first elements. So too, His feet, which contact the earth, and under which all things are put, were as fine brass glowing in a furnace, just as once the fine brass of the altar glowed beneath the fire of the sacrifices. His voice was full of authority and majesty, irresistible

like the thunderous roar of the ocean.

The right hand too speaks of power. His tongue was like "a sharp two-edged sword;" that is, His verdicts had all the discerning and cutting power of the veritable word of God. Finally, His whole countenance was clothed with sun-like glory, too bright for mortal eyes. No wonder, that in the presence of such an One—the Son of Man, arising to judgment, invested with the insignia and glory of Deity—John fell at His feet as dead.

But though he was a servant, and therefore a subject of His judicial scrutiny, John was also a saint, and hence a subject of His grace. His grace is as great as His glory. His right hand, which held the seven stars, was laid upon John, so that he might be lifted up and strengthened to receive and record the visions in which the revelation was to be conveyed. "Fear not," was the assuring word.

The judicial glory of the Lord had been conveyed in the vision; now we have His glory declared in His own words, and that in a threefold way. First, **the glory of Deity**. He is "the First and the Last, and the Living One." Compare this with verse 8, where the Lord God, the Almighty, proclaims Himself the "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending." No one but God can be, "the First" or "the Beginning," but being a Person in the unity of the Godhead, Jesus is God.

Secondly, **the glory of redemption,**

of death and resurrection. He "was" or "became" dead, but now is "alive for evermore," or "living to the ages of ages." He, who is revealed as the universal Judge, has Himself tasted the judgment of death, and risen above its power into resurrection life.

Then, thirdly, **the glory of dominion.** Death and hell (**Hades**) are the great foes of sinful mankind, the symbols of the curse under which sin has brought them. Holding the keys, He is the complete Master of both. Thus Jesus presented Himself in His Deity; in His risen estate, redemption having been accomplished; and as the complete Master of man's ancient foes.

What an uplift this must have been to John! And what an uplift it should be to us! It prepared him to write as he was bidden in verse 19. It will prepare us to read and digest what he has written, and to face with undismayed hearts the searching unfoldings of the book.

Verse 19 should be carefully noted, as it contains the Lord's own division of the book. John was to write (1) the vision he had just seen. This he did in the few verses we have just considered. Then (2) he was to write "the things that are," and (3) "the things which shall be hereafter," or, "the things that are about to be after these." Now in verse 1 of chapter 4 the voice from heaven lifts John in spirit to heaven that he may be shown "things which must be hereafter," or, "things which must take place after these things;" so that as we pass into chapter 4 we begin the third section of the book. Clearly therefore chapters 2 and 3 comprise section 2. We believe this verse 19 is an

important key to the right unfolding of Revelation, so we ask our readers to note it carefully. We have no hesitation in saying that any explanation of the visions of this book which violates this distinction, or does not observe it, is bound to be defective, if not positively erroneous.

The last verse of chapter 1 is introductory to "the things that are," given in chapters 2 and 3. In the vision the Son of Man was seen in the midst of seven golden candlesticks or lamps, and holding seven stars in His right hand. The meanings of these symbols are given to us. Each lamp is a "church" or "assembly." Each star is an "angel" or "messenger" or "representative" of an assembly. We have not here, then, the whole church in its place of privilege, as presented through Paul in Ephesians, Colossians and elsewhere, but each local church in its responsibility to be a light for Christ during the time of His absence as rejected from the earth. The whole church in its oneness men cannot see, but a local church they can, and the practical state and condition of such widely differs. The angel may signify one or more in each church who are representative of it and of its state. The Lord conveys His verdict in each case not to the church as a whole but to the angel, thus again showing the reserve that marked Him in His judgment of their state, and the sense of distance that had supervened. This sense of reserve and distance characterizes the whole book, as we have already observed.

Chapters 2 and 3—"the things which are"—may be read in three ways. First, as a record of the state

of seven churches in the Province of Asia as the first century drew to its close. By then all the Apostles, save the aged John, were gone, and their shepherd care no longer available. Various dangers were discerned and uncovered by the Lord, and various declensions, defections and defilements exposed. Of the seven only two churches, the first and the seventh, are alluded to elsewhere in Scripture. Ephesus was perhaps the crown of Paul's labours, and hence the Lord's verdict on it, 25 or 30 years after his death, is a searching lesson for our hearts.

We have two allusions to Laodicea in Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, but these are enough to show he had some anxiety as to their state even then, and in that Epistle he ministered just the truth that might have preserved them. If the Laodicean saints had received the Colossian unfolding of the supreme excellence of Christ, the Head of His body, the church, He would have become "all, and in all" to them. Then Christ would not have represented Himself as standing **outside their door** and knocking, as in Revelation 3. Here again is something that should search us through and through.

But secondly, we may read the two chapters as giving us an exposure of conditions that may be found reproduced in local assemblies of saints that exist today. As we go through the seven addresses we may well see our own collective state as in a mirror, and learn our Lord's verdict as to it, and discover the corrective and remedy.

Then thirdly, since the whole of this book is a prophecy, as we saw in its opening verses, we have in the

seven churches an unfolding of the historic course of the professing church, viewed as a body in which the light of God was to be maintained during the time of Christ's personal absence from the world. The church was to be the candlestick or light-bearer, till the moment when Christ should arise to execute judgment and assert the Divine authority in the earth. The number seven bears the significance of spiritual completeness, and in the seven addresses the complete history is surveyed. As we go through them let us consider them in all three ways.

To Ephesus the Lord presented Himself as the One who upholds the responsible angels, whilst critically surveying all the churches. Nothing escapes His eye. To Ephesus, as to each church, He says, "I know." Now in Ephesus He knew much that was good and commendable—works, labour, hatred of evil, careful testing of pretensions, endurance, care and zeal for the Lord's Name. But one great thing He had against them; they had left their first love. In our Authorized Version the insertion of "some-what" weakens the sense. It is, "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." This fundamental defect quite spoilt the otherwise favourable picture.

For, what did it mean? This: that while the mechanism was still moving with fair regularity the mainspring was seriously weakened. It was with the church as it had been with Jerusalem, indicated in Jeremiah 2: 2. The church, too, had lost the love of her espousals, which had for a brief moment carried her even into a wilderness for

love of her Lord. And if love for the great Head wanes the love that circulates amongst the members of His body cannot remain unimpaired. No outward zeal or activity or care can compensate for this inward loss. It is such a fall as jeopardizes everything, and demands nothing short of real and deep repentance, as verse 5 indicates.

If "first love" be recovered, the "first works" will naturally follow. These may look to human eyes exactly the same as the works mentioned in verse 2, but to His eyes they are very different. He estimates everything according to the motive that lies behind. The mainspring is of all importance to Him. So much so, that if first love be permanently impaired the ability to shine departs and the candlestick is removed.

This is the state of things that was developing as the last of the Apostles departed. If present day assemblies of saints are judged thus, what candlesticks will remain? There are not too many characterized by even the outward zeal described in verses 2 and 3; but what is revealed if the mainspring be uncovered? A searching question indeed! Does not the word "Repent" sound loudly in our ears? It should do so, inasmuch as all who have ears to hear are called upon to hear the Spirit's messages to the churches. What is said particularly to one church through its angel is of importance to all true saints at any time.

It is worthy of note that the message, though spoken by "One like unto the Son of Man," is also "what the Spirit saith." What the Lord says the Spirit says—the Lord **objectively to John**, and the Spirit **subjectively through John**, for he was "in the Spirit" (1: 10) on this occasion. It was all "the word of God" (1: 2). Thus the unity of the Divine Persons is manifest.

In verse 7 we have overcoming mentioned for the first time. The word thus translated occurs 17 times in the book. Even in the Ephesus condition of things overcoming was a necessity, and there is given the incentive of eating of the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God. Man never ate of the tree of life in Eden. The overcoming here must be the **retaining**, or the **returning to "first love."** As John's Epistle shows, there is the most intimate connection between love and life. Apart from the love of God we should have had no life at all. Having life, it manifests itself in love flowing from us both towards God and our brethren. To eat of the real Tree of life (22: 2), of which Eden's tree was only a figure, is to be as filled with the life of Divine love as a creature can possibly be.

This overcoming was what was needed by saints at Ephesus as the first century closed. It was needed by saints generally in the earliest stages of church history. It is needed **by us today.**

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Little love may give little, great love a great deal, but perfect love brings us into the same place as the One who loves perfectly.

# DESPISING OR FAINTING.

J. HOUSTON

“**M**Y son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12: 5, 6).

There are those who despise the Lord's rebukes and chastisement. They take these things lightly. Their will is unbroken, and they go on in their disobedience, **as if nothing had happened**. They are like naughty children; they have no ear for the voice of correction and warning. And this behaviour leads, of course, to more grave and severe discipline, for they are certainly not stronger than God, so as to resist Him (see 1 Cor. 10: 22).

This spirit of despising, or treating lightly, the corrections and warnings of God, may lead to an unnecessarily prolonged course of discipline. God has no pleasure in prolonging the course of discipline; but our conduct of haughty resistance may necessitate it. Judgment, in all its forms, is His “strange work,” and He undertakes it by constraint for His own glory and our good. “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11: 31, 32).

If we maintain a tender conscience and a spirit of self-judgment, before God, we shall not despise his chastisement. In fact, we shall take it with the gravity and seriousness it demands. We shall have great

searchings of heart before Him, and the attitude we shall have, as we examine ourselves and our ways, will be, as aptly expressed in the words, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139: 23, 24).

On the other hand, there are those who faint under the rebukes of God. They become dispirited, and even mournful. This may lead to utter discouragement, and perhaps despair. They fall down **under** the process, instead of rising **above** it. David was fainting when he said, in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1 Sam. 27: 1). These were not words for the anointed of God, who was to rule on the throne, from which Saul was to be rejected. So too, we may easily fall under our chastisement, whatever form it may take, instead of rising, in a hopeful and cheerful spirit, above it. It is sad to see so many mournful saints to-day. Their conversation consists in a tale of woe. Their joy is gone, and their strength is gone. They faint.

Lessons are not learned by the haughty and inattentive scholars; nor are they learned by the dispirited and dejected. In God's school of discipline, learners make best progress in a spirit of submission and earnestness, seen in their exercise, and of hopefulness and cheerfulness. They are neither lifted up, nor cast down. Circumstances do not affect them, save to cause them exercise and cast them wholly upon

God. Thus we learn our lessons, and learn them well.

Chastisement is not a cause for joy, nor is it intended to be; it is given to create exercise and heart-searching. When taken in the right spirit, "it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness." That is to say, it brings us into a state of blessed peacefulness, with God, ourselves and others. How enjoyable to have this peace, and that in communion with God! It leads us into righteousness too, for we are turned into right paths, a right attitude, a right spirit, and all that is right before God. It is practical righteousness — really what is pleasing to Him in our life.

God's ways with us are ways of

love. He rebukes because He loves. He chastens, because He loves. Earthly parents may chasten their children, "after their own pleasure." But He does this work, "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness."

How this ought to speak to us! We should not, on the one hand, take His discipline lightly, that is, despise it; nor should we lose heart and spirit when going through it, that is, faint under it. We should take it seriously and with exercise; and we should bear it hopefully and cheerfully, knowing all is "for our profit." We would heartily recommend the reader to ponder Heb. 12: 5-13.

## "REMEMBER THEM THAT ARE IN BONDS."

(Hebrews 13: 3).

A. F. POLLOCK

IT seemed to me that the above word of exhortation took on an added urgency when recently I read of the experience of one of the Lord's servants who was arrested in Japan on the day that war broke out between that country and the United States of America and Great Britain, on the 8th December, 1941, and who was not released until 8th April, 1942.

How easy to forget the exhortation to pray for our fellow Christians who are interned in enemy prisons or internment camps and even if we do pray for such how little we may have the sense of being "bound with them" or enter into their sufferings. May then that which I am about to relate bring a new urge and meaning and sympathy into our prayers for such and for one

another, realizing afresh the truth of the Scripture which affirms of the body of Christ: "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. 12: 26).

The servant of God in question tells us that he felt being deprived of books more than anything. For the first month he was without reading matter of any kind.\* Both in the police station and in prison he begged again and again for the books he had in his suitcase, but it was six weeks after his arrest before he was allowed to have a copy of the Bible. This is the one book that either in Japanese or in English is found in the prison libraries of Japan and there is no hesitation in lending it to prisoners. The copy

produced he found had been presented to the prison library by the agent of the American Bible Society in Japan, who had written his name on the flyleaf and added the text, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Later he was allowed to have his own books and when he passed the prison Bible to others more than forty of them read it; some, who had never read it before, went through it from cover to cover, evidently finding comfort therein in their misery and loneliness.

Then he poignantly described how one night shortly after his arrest he felt himself completely deserted and knew not what the future held for him. The uncleanness of body, the soiledness of mind, the hopelessness of isolation, the complete identification of himself with thieves, gamblers, suspects, men who trafficked in women; the ruthlessness of the machine in which he had been caught and in which he was as helpless as a small fly in a large spider's web; above all, what he thought of as being the failure of his friends and the way they had apparently abandoned him; the accumulated shame and weight of all this brought him that night to bitter tears and the verge of a breakdown.

When he had reached what seemed the limit of endurance, it was a message from God's Word that brought relief: "He was numbered with the transgressors."

The effect these words had on him, he describes as follows:—

"A flood of light and illumination came upon me at that

moment. For the first time and through my own experience I knew what the Lord had suffered from His arrest until His crucifixion, as far as the human mind can fathom His experiences, but we must always remember that because of His unique relationship with God and His unique comprehension of sin there is a fundamental difference between His being numbered with the transgressors, and anything any one of us can experience; but we can in measure enter into and apprehend somewhat according to our spiritual capacity. So help came in an unexpected way, but effective beyond belief."

On another occasion after a gruelling time of cross-examination, which brought him to the point of exhaustion, he had a wonderful spiritual experience, which he describes as follows:—

"Toward the end of the session, when my cry became, 'O God, end all this,' quite suddenly relief came, and in a wholly unexpected way. There came into my room a Presence. There was a Presence behind me on my right hand, and a message, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in thy weakness.'"

May, then, this description of the experiences of a prisoner of war send us to our knees on their behalf, with a renewed sense of the need and privilege of prayer on behalf of those in bonds, and with a better understanding of, and greater sympathy for, them in their sufferings.

Let us praise God, too, for the way He succoured and sustained His servant at a time of great trial and

testing; withal may we find our faith and confidence in God stimulated and strengthened.

## THE BODY OF CHRIST.

D. Ross

Notes of an address on Eph. 1: 19-23; 4: 1-16. Col. 1: 18; 2: 19.

**T**HE mid-day sun was shining in all its splendour as that cavalcade approached Damascus, and suddenly a light above its brightness shone upon them and their leader was smitten to the ground. A voice said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And when the persecutor asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" the reply was, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." The voice from heaven told the persecutor that the men and women he was hailing to prison were members of Christ, and in persecuting them he was persecuting Christ.

Let us go to another scene. The Solway Firth, and the tide is rising. And there, bound to a stake, is an old woman called Margaret McLauchlan. Already the waters have reached her and she is in the death throes. Presently they are going to put another young woman, Margaret Wilson, into the waters to die the same death, and they tauntingly say, "What do you see there?" And that young woman, undaunted said, "I see Christ, suffering in one of His members."

Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?  
O height! O depth of love!

This is the mystery, this is the truth that the erstwhile persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, changed now into Paul the Apostle, loved to proclaim,

that Christ and the Church are one. And that thought is wonderfully and beautifully brought out in this figure of the Church as the Body of Christ. It is particularly in the Ephesian and Colossian epistles that it is developed. True the figure has already been used by the Apostle in earlier epistles. For example, in Romans 12 he speaks about there being many members in one body and we are one body in Christ. But there it is not so much the headship of Christ and the union between Christ and the members as the diversity of function and inter-relation between all the members. And then, when he is dealing with that very unruly, self-assertive, boastful assembly in Corinth, where so many show off the gift they had, the apostle uses this beautiful figure in chapter 12. But he does not develop the truth of the headship of Christ, because he speaks about the head being a member just the same as the foot and the hand and the eye. But now this man, who once hailed men and women and put them in prison, is himself lying in prison, and God used him to unfold to us this wonderful truth that the church is the body of Christ, indissolubly linked up with its glorious Head in heaven.

Now I propose to take up this truth and try to draw out some of

the teaching and comfort that it brings to us. But what is a body without a head? So if we say something about the body it is only in order to magnify the glories of the great, ascended Head. Because, mark you, here is the mystery. The Head is in heaven, the body is upon earth. Are you looking anywhere else than heaven for a Head? The temptation in those days was to look to Jerusalem for direction, as though it were the head. A number of people, even in our land, are looking to Rome. They want a head they can see, a head upon earth. Others look to the head of the State as the head of the Church. But, brethren, never let us look for any headship for the Church of God other than the Headship of Him who is far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named. He is Head, and He is an all-sufficient Head.

This truth of Headship has three variants. He is spoken of as being **Head of all principalities and powers**, Head of the universe of God. Then He is **Head of the Church**—we are dealing with that now. Thirdly, He is the **Head of every man**. He is Head of the universe—He made it. He is Head of every man—He became Man in His incarnation—but it was not until His death and glorious resurrection and the manifestation of the mighty power of God of which we have read in Ephesians 1, that He is called Head over all things to His church. He is the Source of all power for His people. Why look to a man, however exalted, however learned, however beautifully clad or richly endowed? Why look for **power** in any other than this all-

sufficient Head, in whom has been manifested all the mighty power of God?

But the Head is not only the Source of power, but also the seat of **knowledge**, and to know Him is to know all things. With Him there is all knowledge and all wisdom, and our desire should be, not merely to increase in the knowledge of Scripture—you want to do that—but also in the knowledge of Him. That was Paul's desire. I think it was one of the Wesleys that spoke of finding at the university town where he was studying an ignorant, illiterate man who could neither read nor write, but, he says, he knows Christ, and knowing Christ he knows all things. Young men and women, by all means increase your knowledge, but see that you get the knowledge that does not come from pope or scientist or philosopher or professor or teacher, the knowledge of God. And the source of that knowledge is the Head in heaven.

But the Head is also the seat of **judgment**. I remember hearing a medical man lecturing on the brain. He had a picture showing the various parts where the faculties were located, and just right at the top was a very sensitive thing called judgment. He was showing how easily that was upset by alcohol, for the first effect of it is to take away the power of criticism, judgment. Now any head you like to choose will be affected by a puff of popularity, the intoxication of pride and of fleshly understanding, but you have a Head whose judgment can never be altered or touched. All power, all knowledge, all judgment or discernment—there it is. Do you

feel your lack? Look to your Head. With Him there is **wisdom**.

And the head is the origin of the **emotions**, those things that move us. What is the all-inclusive emotion that dominates our Head? **Love divine**, that excels all praise, all understanding, all knowledge. In Philippians 1 the Apostle Paul says that he longs after them all "in the bowels of Jesus Christ," or, as the old English version puts it, "from the heart root of Jesus Christ." Do you seek to love your fellow-Christians with ordinary, natural affections? You will not succeed, because some of us are not lovable. But the Apostle Paul loved these Philippian people. Why, at one time he, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, touching the law a Pharisee, hated these people as Gentile dogs. Now he loves them and yearns over them and longs for them and calls them his dearly beloved. Where had he got these emotions, these feelings? He got them from the Head.

But then the head is the seat of **volition**—the will. It is the will, my head, that says what my hand is to do, and what my tongue is to speak. It is the head that says where the foot is to go, and so the Head is the One whose will must be expressed in His body.

And then it is the Source of all **life**. In most lands execution is carried out by severing the head from the body, either by decapitation or hanging. Without the head the body is a lifeless trunk, for life is there. Life resides in Jesus, our glorious Head, and He is the Source of all supply. You remember I read about not holding the Head.

From Him all nourishment comes. It comes doubtless through the joints and bands and so on, but in Colossians the apostle is not concerned with the intermediary members. He takes it that this nourishment, this **supply**, this resource, comes directly from the Head.

And then, though ascended, yet He feels for what every member bears. I prick my finger, immediately, quicker than a telegraphic message, my brain becomes conscious of that. Someone hurts my foot, and immediately the brain becomes conscious of it, and there is **instantaneous sympathy** between the brain and the member that is affected. How good it is to know that the Head knows and feels everything that every member of His body has to bear. And He not only knows and feels, but He sympathizes and succours. Such is the Head, yet it is an inexhaustible subject.

But let us look at the body. The head must have a **vehicle** in which to express its will, and so we find that the church is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The Head is unseen in heaven, but His body is here upon earth, in order that in this world there may be an expression of His will, of His purpose, of His thoughts. Think of the privilege of belonging to that glorious church which is the vehicle and implement here and now by which Christ expresses Himself, and will express Himself in this world. But this vehicle is not a dead thing. You and I want to express our will and we have to take a stick, an implement, a tool, but Christ is expressing Himself in a living organism—nothing dead, but some-

thing that is vital and pulsating with His own life.

A body is an organism, not an organization. Do you know where there are any difficulties cropping up? They are always cropping up—a committee is formed, an organization. Boys and girls of this modern age are difficult to hold. Well, let us have some new organization, let us form some club, some society, let us get a uniform to put on, in order to hold them. So men go on organizing, and God is going on with this living, growing vital organism. The Head in heaven has His life and it is working out in this organism, which He calls His church.

And then there is the **oneness** of the body. In the Ephesian epistle the Apostle Paul is particularly emphasizing that. What men do is to emphasize differences. I am better educated than that man, therefore I stand on a higher level. I have more money in the bank than this man, therefore he is on another level from me. I have a white skin and that man has a black skin. I belong to the proud Nordic race and that poor fellow with a big nose belongs to the Semitic race, and therefore he must be an outcast. That is what men are doing and that is the most up-to-date philosophy—to divide, to separate, to build up walls or partitions between man and man. And here is the mystery of God—He has made of twain one new man so making peace. He has reconciled them in one body and in that body there is neither Jew nor Gentile. All these differences of race and class and culture, that men make so much of, are gone.

There is one body, and this oneness has a three-fold aspect. There is what I have been emphasizing, oneness with Christ Himself. Without the head a body is dead. It is not a body, it is a corpse. We are one with our risen living Head, but consequently we are one with each other. We are all one body in Christ Jesus. And then the third thought; there is this oneness because the body is permeated and pervaded by the one Spirit. Here is a unity not formed by any fleshly effort, not formed by uniting churches that have been disunited, but the unity of the Spirit, that we cannot form, that we cannot restore, but we have to use all diligence to keep. And just as my body is pervaded or controlled by my spirit, so this body. We are all baptised into one body by the same Spirit. You have not got one Spirit and I another. This wonderful unity, this oneness with the Head, this oneness with one another, has been brought about by the all pervading presence of the Spirit of God.

But if the body speaks of unity it no less emphatically speaks of **diversity**. The body is not one member. It is composed of many different members—even as is the human body, which is the crown of His creation, and His masterpiece. But there is a far greater masterpiece, His workmanship in the church, that is to manifest the authority, wisdom and power of God. And unity is not uniformity. What a miserable world this would be if everything were the same, if there was only one kind of thing. That is what some of us are trying to make. We want all Christians to come out like machine-made

products. Now that is not the thought. The wonderful diversity of form and function and operation in the human body is reproduced in this spiritual body, the Church. You will notice the apostle not only speaks of "the whole body," but also of "every one of us." You are not alone in this body. You have your identity. You have your special function. Our exercise should be, are we performing the function?

Now do not get away from it all by saying, I am not gifted. You know that is often an excuse for laziness and lack of exercise. There are special gifts. The ascended Lord has given gifts unto men. It does not say He gave **one** an apostle, He gave **one** a prophet, He gave **one** an evangelist, He gave **one** a pastor and teacher. He gave **some**, so beware of any theory that tells you God can only speak to His people through one man at one time. That way lies heresy: that way lies schism, when one man is exalted to the position of being the vessel of the testimony.

He gave some apostles for the authoritative declaration of the truth. He gave some prophets for the unfolding and application of that truth. These have gone, but we have their writings. And then the evangelist is mentioned in connection with the Church. What is he working for? To get souls saved? Thank God He is. Is that all? No, he is working for the increase of the body. Do not let us despise the evangelistic gift, the power of catching men and women for Christ. Then there are pastors and teachers for the feeding and instructing and tending of the

Church. All this wonderful diversity of gift is for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of service.

Now we have not set aside a certain class of men. We have tried to avoid clerisy, but have we done so? How often there is apathy and indifference instead of being equipped for a ministry which is from the whole people of God. Not only the few who take part, but the whole body is to be functioning. You say, I am not the heart. That is a most important organ in the body. I am only a little gland. I remember once seeing a little tot of a girl, apparently ten years of age, but really seventeen. I said, What has happened? Well, they said, it seems some little gland has not functioned and the body is stunted. So do not despise the apparently little and unimportant place you occupy in the Church. The whole body is to be equipped for this ministry.

There is a certain body that calls itself the Church, and in that the clergy are everything—the laity do not count. Are we not in danger of that?—just becoming the laity, the rank and file, that never open their mouths. Is everybody here exercised as to the part they are playing in the operation and the service of the Church of God? Every joint, every band, every gland, everything counts if the body is to function properly. And what is the object? Growth. That girl I have been telling you about with a babe's body had a developed mind. There is something wrong with those who have men's bodies and babe's minds. There should be development to maturity, which is the purpose of all

ministry till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And it is the whole Church that is needed for that.

My last thought is **symmetry**. A wonderful thing the body is, harmoniously planned. The whole thing is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth. And, notice the preposition, you are growing up **into** the Head and **from** Him is coming down the supply, the nourishment, but it is coming through every joint, so that there should be increase, growth. It is the body that is building itself up and this self-edification of itself is in the all-pervasive power of what? **Love**,

Do you know the truth? Well, hold it, as well as speak it, in love. Are you functioning in this wonderful body? It is to be here in manifestation of the love of God. You know what John says, No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father was here to declare the love of God. What does he say in his epistle? No man hath seen God at any time, but "if we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." There is a manifestation of God, and God is love. If every member were functioning in the body, there would be in this world a wonderful manifestation of what the world most needs, and that is the love of God.

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## ON CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

**WHILST** the extent and variety of Christian ministry have been overlooked, the dangers of that particular department, which is more ostensibly **the** Christian ministry have not been duly estimated. It is a solemn word, "My brethren, be not many teachers; knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation, for in many things we offend all: if any man offend not **in word**, the same is a perfect man; able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3: 1, 2). The Spirit in the Apostle foresaw that the ministry of the word would be of reputation in the world; whilst the unobtrusive service of those who might not be qualified for it, would be proportionately disregarded; nor is it difficult to

assign the reason for this. The spirit which showed itself in the Corinthian Church, of walking after man, in the forgetfulness that Paul and Apollos were only ministers of God, by whom they had believed, even as the Lord gave to each (1 Cor. 3) in the progress of spiritual declension, issued in the division of the Christian Church into clergy and laity; the ministry of the gospel began to be looked upon as a learned profession, and was, in process of time, exalted into a **PRIESTHOOD**; as such, it had a strong hold on the natural heart of man, meeting both his natural admiration of that which is learned, and his natural dependence on something sensible between him and God . . .

A distinct order of priesthood seems, from its very general prevalence, to be that which the very necessity of man craves. That such an order was established by God Himself, whose prerogative it is to appoint the channel by which He will be approached (Heb. 5: 4, 5) there needs no proof. They were ministers of the letter (2 Cor. 3: 6), their qualification was, that they were of a particular tribe and of a particular family. No stranger, no one, save of the family of Aaron, might approach the altar of the Lord or His sanctuary (Num. 18: 7). It was in mercy to the people that it was so ordered (Num. 17: 12, 13), they could not, they dare not approach unto God, lest they should be consumed by His holiness; therefore the Lord said unto Aaron, "Thou, and thy sons, and thy father's house with thee, shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary." The order of the priesthood tended to turn the people from themselves to the priest, as capable of bearing their iniquity (Exod. 28). But while it gave them comfort in this way, it served to keep them at a distance from God; for there was nearness of approach for the priest and Levite, but none for the people; this was the necessary effect of an **ordered priesthood on the earth**, to keep the people at a distance from God—to keep them without (Luke 1: 10).

The removal of this distance is that which was effected by the change of the order of priesthood, which was not the change of one earthly order for another, but the change of an earthly for a heavenly priesthood. The great point, which the Apostle presses on the Hebrews was, that now as **holy brethren** (them-

selves now consecrated by the Holy Spirit to God, as Aaron by the anointing oil) partakers of the heavenly calling, they should turn away their thoughts from the earthly priesthood, to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession—Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3: 1) and then by leading on their minds to His greatness and sympathy, to bring them boldly unto a throne of grace, without the intervention of any other (Heb. 4: 14-16) . . . . Whatever, therefore, tends to put anything between man and God does thereby obscure the grace of the gospel. Nothing is too abject for the mind of man to submit to, it be spared the irksomeness of continual dependence on God, by looking to a visible order, to think and act for it (2 Cor. 11: 19, 20). It is this, as well as the desire of man to lord it over God's heritage (1 Peter 5: 2, 3), which has tended to exalt the Christian ministry into an order; it is this which our Lord would counteract when He says, "Be not ye called Rabbi for one is your master, and all ye are brethren." (Matt. 23: 7, 8) . . . . Let us, therefore, be very jealous of delegating that to select individuals, which is the portion of the church at large, lest in any way we infringe on the blessed liberty of the children of God . . . .

The change in dispensation is from the letter to the Spirit; and this is properly called a spiritual dispensation, because that in it the Holy Spirit is sovereign, during the absence of Jesus, to glorify Him; He is the director of its ministries, as well as giver of joy: He is the **other** Comforter, to perform all the functions of the One who was gone

away. The great point is that He shall not be hindered; but surely an ordered ministry, going back to the letter, does tend to hinder His functions and to obscure His glory. Of such a ministry the world can take cognizance, such it will honour, and impute that to man's abilities and eloquence which alone belongs to the Spirit. Of Him it is said, "Whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." (John 14: 17). And therefore that the Christian ministry should be of honour in the world, at once proves that its very character is forgotten; and just in proportion as it has become reputable, has it ceased to be powerful; whatever of real power there may be in it, has been given to man and not to God. Power must be owned because felt; and the question, "By what authority doest Thou these things, and who gave Thee this authority?" (Matt. 21: 23) what is it, except the acknowledgment of power but refusal to own it without order, even the order of man, that is, the sanction of human appointment? The inconveniences to be apprehended from giving freedom to the Spirit of God to act, are nothing to

be compared to the positive evil of shutting Him out by a fleshly order; it may be, that people love to have it so, but it necessarily blinds to the real state of our spiritual destitution . . .

May the Lord humble us for our sinning against His order in the pride of our own wisdom. May He give us grace to repent, by ceasing from man, and in all simplicity of mind, throwing ourselves on the teaching of His Spirit. It is His presence alone that can give life and power to our prayers, and to our exhortations. It would be weakness in the judgment of the flesh, but it is in fact that little strength which the Lord honours (Rev. 3: 8). It is really being in the truth, and presenting to the outward eye, that which we feel we are in the sight of God; poor, miserable, blind and naked. Let us but be upright before God, and we shall find His strength made perfect in our weakness, and have the confidence that we love the truth, which is the only safeguard from delusion.

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## THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

As **miracle** is the intervention of God's grace in **act**, **prophecy** is the intervention of God's grace in **testimony**. Both appear on the background of man's failure . . . But prophecy is a proof of the divine origin of Scripture. Its force is, unlike that of miracle, not dependent on the credibility of testimony. **It is its own evidence**. It is fulfilled before the eyes of the world. The Jews, Tyre, Babylon, Nineveh, demonstrate to all who have eyes to see that we have a sure word of prophecy, and that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLL

(Chapter 2: 8—23).

**T**HE address to the angel of the church in Smyrna is the briefest of the seven. Four verses contain the whole of it. This is remarkable, since it shares with Philadelphia the distinction of receiving from the Lord no word of censure or blame. On the contrary, it receives a word of commendation.

Tribulation and even martyrdom characterized the outward circumstances of the church in Smyrna, and the Lord presented Himself to them in a character that exactly suited this. He is the first, and therefore none can forestall Him, so as to hinder. He is the last, and hence none but He can have the final word in any matter. Moreover He became dead and lived, and this guarantees that He wields the power of resurrection on behalf of those who belong to Him. If the Smyranean saints apprehended Him in this way, they must have been greatly fortified against their approaching tribulations.

Having presented Himself thus, the Lord again said, "I know." Tribulation and poverty marked them to the outward eye. They must therefore have been most unattractive to any who could not penetrate beneath the surface. To the all-seeing eye of the Lord it was far otherwise, and His surprising verdict was, "but thou art rich." So we have here the exact opposite of what presently He says to Laodicea, who claimed to be rich, and in His eyes was miserably poor. Thus it is that the Spirit speaks to the churches, and if we have an ear

to hear we shall be profited. All through the church's history times of poverty and tribulation have been accompanied by spiritual enrichment: times of affluence and ease by spiritual impoverishment. Thus too it is to-day.

They had to face also opposition of a religious sort. There were those who falsely called themselves Jews; that is, claimed to have an earthly religious standing before God, as the people that He acknowledged in the world. Saying that they were this, they naturally assumed that worldly prosperity and possessions would be theirs, and they would repudiate those in poverty and trouble. Consequently they slandered and reviled—for this seems to be the force of "blasphemy" here—those who were true saints of God. The One who has eyes as a flame of fire discerns their true character and exposes them. They were not Jews, but they were a synagogue, a word which signifies "a bringing together"—a "synagogue of Satan." They were probably people of the Judaizing type that so persistently opposed the Apostle Paul, only now further advanced in their evil, coming together as a party, and wholly disowned by the Lord.

In Ephesus there were those that said they were apostles. Here we find those that said they were Jews. Before we finish the seven churches we shall find others who claim to be somewhat, but in each case we shall hear the Lord utterly disallow their claim. This making of claims is a

natural proclivity of the flesh, so we may very easily be betrayed into it in our day. Let us carefully avoid it.

Verse 10 shows that behind the world that persecuted, and the self-assertive "Jews" that reviled them, lay the power of the devil. He is the great instigator of the opposition that comes from both the pagan world and the religious world, persecuting even to prison and to death. But the One who wields the power of resurrection places Himself behind these saints in their tribulation and poverty, exhorting them to faithfulness, even unto death, and holding before their eyes a crown of life. The power of death is the devil's great weapon: the power of resurrection life is in the hands of Christ.

The "ten days" of tribulation doubtless had reference to some definite but limited period of trial that lay before the church in Smyrna as the first century drew to its close. From the extended prophetic point of view the reference would be to the successive outbursts of persecution during the first few centuries, which are said to have numbered ten, and ended under the Emperor Diocletian. These persecutions had the effect, under God's governmental hand, of checking the downward trend in the church and preventing the inrush of worldliness that later engulfed it, stimulating "first love" rather than extinguishing it. This accounts for no reproof being administered to the church in Smyrna. The much-needed lesson for us is that **tribulation** is the normal thing for Christians, if they are disentangled from the world,

even as Paul states in 2 Timothy 3: 12. The "Great Tribulation" is another thing altogether.

The promise to the overcomer also has special reference to that which lay before them. Many of them might be hurt of the first death, the death of the body, but none of them would be touched of the second death, which would come in due season on their adversaries. This fact was to encourage the martyrs then, and doubtless has done so with the martyrs through the ages.

There is a tendency sometimes to regard the various promises to the overcomers as being special and exclusive to them. This promise in verse 11 would show that it is not so, for no true believer will be hurt of the second death. They are rather to be regarded as the Lord promising with special emphasis things calculated to act as an incentive and encouragement, though they may be shared wholly or in measure by all the saints.

To Pergamos the Lord presented Himself as the One who has the all-discerning, all-powerful word of God, that pierces and divides asunder all that is entangled and indistinguishable to the eyes of men. The church at Pergamos at that time, and the saints in the Pergamos stage of the church's history, needed to know Him in that light, since alliance with the world was being taught and consolidated in their midst. Nor do we need such knowledge less in our day, when alliance with the world is accepted as the proper thing with so large a part of Christendom.

All things at Pergamos were naked and open, and the sharp sword could divide and analyse, so again we have the words, "I know." The seat of Satan may have been an allusion to a particularly Satanic form of idolatry practised in ancient Pergamos, but viewing this church as prophetically indicating the third stage in the church's history, we see in it an allusion to the world system of which Satan is the god and prince. The church had begun to dwell in the world system; that is, to find its home there. This opened the door to the evils mentioned in verses 14 and 15.

Even so, the name and the faith of Christ had not been given up, but was still held fast, and there were some amongst them who were so true to both that they incurred the violent hostility of the world, even unto martyrdom. Antipas is named and designated, "faithful," which was high commendation indeed. His name is doubtless intended to speak to us, since translated into English it signifies, "against all." The saint who by reason of his faithfulness finds all the world against him is an Antipas indeed.

But, while they had faithful witnesses among them, they also had, without definite repudiation, those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitans. We are given here a summary of Balaam's teaching, for the full details of which we have to turn to Numbers 25: 1-9; coupled with 31: 16. Balaam remained in the background but prompted Balac to cast the stumbling block, enticing to idolatry and fornication, two things that are always joined together in the

heathen world. The former is the most fundamental of all sins against God; the latter is against mankind as well as God. Both sins are seen amongst the heathen in their grossest forms, but in a more spiritualized way flourish in Christendom.

In 2 Peter we read of "the way of Balaam . . . who loved the wages of unrighteousness." In Jude, of "the error of Balaam," and in this, as well as in his way, he set an example that has been followed by many to their destruction. But here we have his doctrine; that is, a system of teaching which maintains that **alliance with the world** is quite the proper thing for the people of God. There seems to be no certain knowledge as to the Nicolaitans, either as regards their deeds, denounced to Ephesus, or their doctrine, denounced here. Their name, however, is a compound of two Greek words, which translated mean, "Conquerors of the people"; so this may be intended to indicate that type of teaching which exalts a priestly caste, leading to that spiritual enslavement of the people which has risen to its heights in the Romish system. How bad priestly rule can become is borne witness to in Jeremiah 5: 31, and this when there **were** earthly priests, **instituted of God**. How much worse and hateful to God is it to-day!

In Pergamos neither of these evils were full blown in such fashion that the whole church was characterized by them. It was that they had in their midst those who **held** these things; it does not go so far as to say that they taught them. The Lord's words evidently imply that the church should not tolerate in its

midst those who hold things so fundamentally evil as these. A solemn thought for us to-day. Again the word is "Repent," and if that word is not heeded the Lord will take action and use the sharp sword with two edges against the teachers of evil. He will deal with them if the church fails to deal with them. May we be among those who have ears to hear the Spirit's voice in this.

There will be found some who overcome in this state of things, and the promise to them makes reference first, to the Old Testament, and then to a custom common in those days. The hidden manna was that deposited in the ark and so hidden from human eyes. It was typical of the graces of the humbled Christ, so beautiful in the Divine estimation but hidden from the eyes of men. The overcomer should feed upon, and thus have communion in, that which is the very delight of God, whereas communion with the world was becoming characteristic of the church in Pergamos. The white stone was given in those days as a token of acquittal. The overcomer should have not only this, but in it a new name, known only to himself and the One who gave it; a token therefore that the Lord owned them as His, in view of communion with Himself. So we may say that the overcomer is promised communion with both the Father and the Son.

Let us all accept the solemn fact that communion with God and communion with the world are antagonistic and mutually exclusive. We cannot have both. It must be one or the other.

To Thyatira the Lord presented Himself as **the Son of God**, who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like

fine brass. This is remarkable inasmuch as in the vision of chapter 1 John saw these features as characterizing One like **the Son of Man**. But if, as we believe, the church in Thyatira represents prophetically the period which witnessed the rise to power and ascendancy of the Romish hierarchy, how much to the point is this change of designation. Rome admits that He is the Son of God, yet lays all the emphasis on His being the Son of Mary, so much so that ultimately Mary becomes the more prominent. But no, the Son of God is He who has the eyes that penetrate and discern all things, and the feet that will crush all evil. And again we have that word, "I know."

He knew even in Thyatira things that were good; not only works but love, faith, service, patience. Moreover their last works were more than the first—they increased as time went on. Though things were very dark, as succeeding verses show, the eyes as a flame of fire discerned the good, where perhaps we should have seen none. An instructive thought for us to-day, for when things are really bad we are too apt to condemn wholesale without exception.

But on the other hand, having acknowledged the good, the Lord does unsparingly condemn the bad. In verse 20, the words, "a few things" should not be there. Their permitting the activities of Jezebel was a matter of great gravity. We have no doubt that the Thyatiran saints at the end of the first century would have at once known to what, or to whom, the Lord made allusion. Viewed prophetically, the symbolism exactly fits the Romish hierarchy. Note the four points following.

First, it is the **woman** Jezebel. Every attentive reader of Scripture knows that Jezebel was not a man. Then, why emphasize that she was a woman? Because in Scripture symbolism a woman is again and again used to represent a **system**, while a man may represent the energy that actuates it. As the Middle Ages drew on there was witnessed the development of the Romish system in all its enslaving power.

Second, the name **Jezebel** carries our thoughts back to the dark ages in Israel's history when Ahab ruled nominally, but sold himself to work wickedness under his wife's influence. Jezebel was a complete outsider who entrenched herself in Israel, and became the determined opponent and persecutor of the true saints of God.

Third, she called herself a **prophetess**. In Ahab's day she did it by taking hundreds of false prophets under her protection. Rome has done it by claiming to be the only authorized exponent of the word of God. Their slogan became, and still is, "Hear the Church," but for all practical purposes this has always meant, hear the college of cardinals with the Pope at their head; that is, hear the Romish hierarchy — hear Jezebel! They claim to be the only teaching authority.

Fourth, the whole drift of their teaching is in the direction of **spiritual fornication and idolatry**, which means utter worldliness. What was beginning in Pergamos became rampant, and acknowledged as the proper thing, in Thyatira. In the four or five centuries that

preceded the Reformation the Pope and the whole papal system practised and gloried in worldly abominations of the most pronounced and outrageous sort. Repentance was necessary, and ample time for it was granted without avail. History records how many were the centuries during which Romish abominations increased. Time to repent was certainly given.

But judgment, though lingering for long, will not slumber for ever. It is not exactly the church in Thyatira that is threatened, but Jezebel, and also her children; that is, the lesser but similiar systems that have sprung from her. Jezebel and her paramours shall be flung into great tribulation; her children smitten with spiritual death. It does not specifically say, **the great tribulation**, though we should judge that what Jezebel represents will develop into the mystical Babylon of chapter 17, and be destroyed during the great tribulation period. The judgment when it comes will be final.

But meanwhile the Lord so deals, both with the parent and the children, as to manifest to all the churches that He is the Searcher of all hearts. His governmental judgments take their course before He acts finally and for ever.

The closing words of verse 23 are really an encouragement. The evil system will be dealt with, yet each soul will be judged on an individual basis. According to their works will each be recompensed. The individual is not lost in the mass. In the case of Thyatira it leads to the discovery of a remnant that is for God, as the following verses reveal.

# THE SOLID FOUNDATION.

A. J. POLLOCK

**I**T has been well said that self-justification is like a shirt, which is the first garment a man puts on, and the last he takes off. The little child caught in some peccadillo does not need to be taught the art of self-justification; it comes naturally to fallen sinful nature. We are quick to expect others to confess their faults; very slow to do so ourselves.

There is no doubt we live in a very superficial age. The sense of sin hardly exists in the minds of the great majority, who read no Bible and listen to no Gospel preacher, but are to all intents and purposes heathen, although living in a so-called Christian land. Now all this has a sad influence upon even true Christians. It is hard to be uninfluenced by the surrounding atmosphere.

In such environment, it is good and wise that Christians, especially young Christians with vigorous life before them, should soak their minds in Scripture. Especially would we commend the Epistle to the Romans. It has been pointed out that the Epistles of Paul and Peter, James and Jude were mostly written before the three synoptic Gospels. There is something to be learned from this. The apostles went everywhere preaching the Gospel. The crucifixion was fresh in their memories, and our Lord had been

“declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” (Rom. 1: 4).

“With great power gave the

apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4: 33).

They preached the cross, the resurrection, and Christ the only Saviour. But when the three synoptic Gospels were written we find in them the great facts of the crucifixion and the resurrection, yet the doctrinal meaning of it all was not elaborated. The facts are given us, but doctrines emanating therefrom were not logically stated. This was anticipated in the Epistle to the Romans. What should we know of the full meaning of the death of our Lord were it not that we read the Gospels in the light of Romans? And Romans is lit up by the glory of the cross and the splendid triumph of the resurrection. We read Romans **now** in the light of the Gospels. If a reader wishes to know the depravity of the human heart let him read the Gospels, where the treatment the world accorded to the Son of God will set that forth; and let him read Romans, for there he will find the Divine summing up of the human race.

A Bible without Romans would suffer irreparable loss. It has often been noticed that the wonderful revival by the Spirit of God four centuries ago in the Reformation, the blessing of which we feel to this day, was founded on Romans. We remember how Martin Luther was laboriously toiling up on hands and knees the Sacred Stair of the St. John Lateran Church in Rome, when in the midst of his degrading, superstitious task there came into his mind with great power the very

pith of the Epistle to the Romans, in the three words, "**Justification by faith.**" In a moment he rose to his feet, refusing to complete his foolish task, the shackles of Rome dropped from him, and he became a leading figure in the glorious Reformation, and spoke and wrote much on the Epistle to the Romans. On that Epistle the Reformation was largely built up.

We once heard a very ill-savoured remark. It was to the effect that Romans was for beginners, but as we advanced in Christian knowledge we could leave that behind and pass on to the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, which were more wonderful and lofty. Our thoughts ran on the lines of an illustration. When in New York many years ago, the writer went to the top of a skyscraper, in those days some thirty storeys high. When he got to the top and looked over the parapet, and saw people in the streets looking like mere ants, he turned to his friends and said, "My chief reflection on reaching this giddy height is this, What kind of foundation is there? I never felt the importance of a good foundation as I do at this moment." My friends replied, "Yes, the foundation of this building is four storeys under the level of the ground, ribbed in steel, and made as secure as human ingenuity can make it."

How grand it is to view the foundations of the Christian faith, and anyone who gets to the blissful heights of Ephesians and Colossians, not as a mere doctrinaire, but in their true meaning, must appreciate to the full the foundation, on which all the Divine blessings are based.

How can there be a superstructure without a foundation? The greater and grander the superstructure, the greater and more solid the foundation must be.

Let us look at the foundation and we shall see how deep is the necessity for it in the light of the great confession of the Apostle Paul,

"I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing."  
(Chap. 7: 18).

It would take a good deal to bring a man like the Apostle Paul to such a confession. He was not outwardly a vile sinner, a reprobate, as men say. On the contrary, he was a most exemplary man, if judged by the accepted standards of the law, and the gravity of his sin, when he persecuted the Church of God, was so little realized that he actually thought he was doing God's service. It is worthy of note that this thorough and deep confession did not fall from the lips of a thief or a murderer, but from the very precise lips of this model Pharisee. How all things were changed when he saw the light above the brightness of the sun, and heard the voice of the Son of God, and **saw Him**. He had thought that Christ was an impostor, and that he was doing a good deed in trying to rid the world of His followers, when suddenly he realized he was in the presence of something beyond and above this world, and heard the voice of One, whose very tones carried conviction. In a moment he realized that instead of being an impostor, and in his grave, the One who hung upon the cross was in the glory of God, the Anointed of God, a Prince and a Saviour, the very One the Old

Testament prophecies said would come, and that He was risen, glorified and triumphant. Henceforth in the light of that, he knew himself to be wholly evil, and he surrendered himself utterly on the altar of devotion to his Lord.

I wonder if the young Christians, who may read these lines, can reaffirm for themselves, that in their flesh dwelleth no good thing. If we get as far as that in the true knowledge of our souls, we have got a good way in the things of God. True it is that self-justification, like the shirt, is the last thing to take off, and is the most difficult to get rid of. Complacency often marks us, we hold certain comforting views, and are little concerned as to really judging what we were in the flesh, and answering to what God would have us be in His holy presence.

But in Romans we come to the glory of the cross and the meaning of the resurrection. In the Gospels the resurrection is chronicled, but it is connected with His Person, and nothing is said as to its meaning and teaching for the believer. When we get to Romans we read that our Lord

“was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Chap. 4: 25; 5: 1).

In those words we find the solid foundation, without which we cannot build any superstructure spiritually. The only place in the Bible where the word, **Justifier**, is found is in Romans.

“To declare I say at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Chap. 3: 26).

God is the only Justifier. If God is the Justifier, who can condemn? There is but one answer. God who knows all we have been guilty of, and all that we are; God who knows all that His blessed Son did on the cross in satisfying Divine righteousness, that **God is the Justifier of the believer**. There is a solid foundation. We throw the light of Romans on the great fact of the resurrection in the Gospels, and we see how happily the believer is linked up with it.

We can and do thank God from the bottom of our hearts for the Gospels, and we do thank God from the bottom of our hearts for Romans, as indeed we do for Ephesians and Colossians. But to pit one part of God's word against another is worse than foolish. Let us rather value all God's writings, and seek to value and gain from each according to its setting.

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God requires obedience of mind, as well as action. He alone can subdue unto Himself our powers of mind, which venture to judge the things of God, refusing to accept what we cannot comprehend—a disobedience and pride which has no parallel, except in the disobedience and pride of Satan.

# THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

D. Ross

Notes of an address on Ephesians 5: 22-33.

IN Scripture the people of God are viewed under different figures. They are the flock of God, and the flock needs **protection**. Then the family, and that tells of our parentage or our **paternity**—and it is a good thing to know that our Father is God. Then the Church is the body of Christ, and that speaks of the expression of the **power** of our risen Head in His people here. Then we may take the figure of the Church as the house of God, and there we have the indwelling **presence** of God with His people. But I think the most blessed, the most intimate of all the figures used is the one that we are now going to study—the bride, for this brings out the **preciousness** of the Church to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the figure that is used here is not a new one. You find it all through the Old Testament. You can roughly divide the Old Testament into three sections. First the historic books. There we have beautiful types of the bride. Eve, part of Adam himself. Rebekah, of the same stock as Isaac, the same kinship, belonging to the same family. Asenath, the bride that Joseph won when he was exalted, after all the suffering and toil in prison, and then there was fruitfulness and satisfaction. And so one can run through the brides of the historic books.

Then when you come to the poetical books you get in lovely language the joy of the bridegroom in his bride. Take, for instance, Psalm 45, the royal psalm. Then

again, you have the love song of all love songs, the Canticles, and there Israel no doubt is in view, though it can be applied to the Church. You could even be like Samuel Rutherford, for if you read his letters and writings you will find that he could only find expression for his sense of the intimate, tender love of Christ in the words of the Song of Solomon. The hymn we often sing is based upon his words:—

Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved's mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His "house of wine"!

And then, when you come to the prophets, the last section of the Old Testament, you have got the sorrow of God over His unfaithful people. Beautiful, wonderful, touching language it is. Listen to how the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, expresses the grief of the heart of God. He says, "Thus saith the Lord; 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." And then the book of Hosea gives us a picture of what someone has called the heart-break of God for His unfaithful people. Hosea was the prophet of the broken heart who found in the tragedy of his own life—the unfaithfulness of his own wife, and then the recovery at the command of God of that wife—a type of God's greater grief.

But now, when we come to the New Testament, the Apostle Paul applies this figure to the Church, and we hear him saying to those

unfaithful Christians in Corinth, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Yet the fullest unfolding of this wonderful teaching, this mystery regarding Christ and the Church, is given to us in the chapter I have read to you. Now I want to show you some of the thoughts that the Lord would teach us in connection with this beautiful figure, Christ and His Bride. Some people make a point of the Church not being called the Bride here. Well, what do you call a woman that is presented to a man as his wife if you don't call her the bride. If Christ is to be husband and the Church the wife, then there is the bride and the Bridegroom.

The first thought is this, **how dear to the heart of the Saviour is His Church.** You cannot think of any union more profound than that of man and wife as God meant that union to be. God had this in His mind when on that first marriage day He presented to the first man that which He had builded out of Himself to be a help-meet, to be a complement, to be a companion. It was not good that man should be alone, and think of it, that is the figure that is used by the Holy Spirit to show the deep, tender, infinite, profound love that the Lord has for His Church. Truly dear to the heart of the Saviour, dear are the saints of God. Dearer than any other, dearer than anything His hands have ever made is this Church, purchased at the cost of His life's blood.

And then the second thought here—one that presents much difficulty to modern people. You will notice

the wife is not exhorted to **obey** her husband. Children are told to obey their parents, servants are told to obey their masters, but the wife's privilege is to **submit** herself to her husband. It is not my intention to tell the wives their duty and the husbands theirs, though both spring out of this wonderful figure. I want rather to speak of Christ and the Church, and here is this Church subject to Christ, her Head. Not so much her Lord but her Head, and this One is the Saviour of the body. All the deliverance, all the saving, that she needs or ever will have, comes to her from her Head, who is also Saviour of the body. And thus it is you find **the Church in dependence, in subjection to her glorious Head.**

To-day we hear a great deal about equality of rights, equality of payment, equality of service between men and women. Now there is one thing I would say about that, you cannot equate things that are different. There is a difference, a profound difference, that God has made and that God meant to make, and it is not a question of inferiority or equality. He made them male and female and there you have no question of equation but of complement. The woman needs the man. Aye, but the man needs the woman. And that is the figure that is taken here to express the relationship to Christ of the Church to which you and I belong.

The profoundest thought here is that of **the devotion of Christ's love to His Church.** It would not be very difficult for a wife to submit herself to a husband that loved her as Christ loved the Church. No husband need lecture his wife as to her duty of

submission if he manifests in any degree this wonderful, self-sacrificing devotion that never thinks of itself, but only thinks of the object of its love. Behind all this there is of course the atoning death of Christ. You read in another part that He has bought the Church with His blood, but that is not the thought here. It is the self-sacrificing devotion of Christ that did not count the cost.

Do you remember, if we go back to one of those Old Testament figures how long and hard Jacob had to serve for the bride that he had chosen? He had to serve seven years and they seemed unto him but a few days. Why? For the love that he had for her. That is what is brought out here. The cost is nothing, it is forgotten in that self-devoting, self-sacrificing love of Christ our Head. Later on when Jacob was talking to his father-in-law he reminded him of all that he had endured for his bride. Listen to what he says, "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes." Yes, this was the cost, and my friends, you and I will never know how deep were the waters crossed, nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere He won His Bride. He counted it as nothing for the love that He bore to His Church.

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. There is the proof of love. Do you know what is wrong with many marriages of to-day? The husband is out to **get**. Christ manifests Himself as the One who **gave**, not only all that He had, but even Himself. And what is His design in thus devoting Himself to death?

He was going to set the Church apart, sanctifying it, having cleansed it by the water of the Word. It is the Word of God that cleanses. This Bridegroom must have a Bride that is worthy of Himself, and hence there is this cleansing by the water of the Word.

Then there is the day that lies ahead. Think of **the glorious destiny of this Church**, the marriage day. That is what the Bride looks forward to. But if the Church is looking forward to it eagerly there is One who looks forward to that day still more eagerly, because He is going to present it to Himself, a Church arrayed in glory. What a day of display that will be!

Let us go back to one of our Old Testament figures. When Abraham's servant went to fetch the bride from Isaac's kindred to Isaac, he took with him jewels of silver and gold and gorgeous raiment from his master in order to adorn the bride. So in that day the Bride of Christ will be dressed in beauty not her own. Glory will be bestowed upon her. You remember how, in the book of Revelation, "She should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." One version puts it, "of dazzling whiteness." Everything there is according to God, and that raiment is the righteousnesses of saints. If Christ has won the Church to Himself then He has put within His saints a power for righteousness, and we are to be weaving the garment now in which His Church will be arrayed then. In this day spots, blots, foulnesses appear, that dishonour the fair name of Christ, and cause heart-break, as once they did to the Apostle Paul. But in that day

the church will be without spot, no flaw, and no wrinkle. Is it not a comfort?

What a difference between the true bride and the false — the harlot of which we read in Revelation 17. Very different her garment, purple and scarlet and gold and jewels. She was in alliance with the world, mixed up with the State, out for power and pomp and popularity and wealth, and just as that increased so has spiritual power declined. We have to keep our garment unspotted from the world. There are two mysteries. There is the mystery of Christ and the Church, and the mystery of Babylon. But God's judgment will come on that proud, boastful, wicked system, and the true Church will be taken to glory and there displayed, holy and without blemish, as the Bride of Christ.

But if Christ in His devotion died for His Church, if in His love He had designs for a glorious destiny that yet awaits His Church, what about the present? He nourishes and cherishes it. What is the difference between nourishing and cherishing? Well, I think we may see it exemplified in happy earthly unions. It is not enough for a husband to see that his wife has a house, clothes, food, comfort. He is not a husband at all if he does not do that. There is something extra, the cherishing of love that makes the happy union. Now from heaven there comes all the nourishment, all the supply that is needed for the Church, but further He cherishes it. There is all the outflowing of His tender, intimate, divine affection, for "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

Be careful to quote that Scripture correctly. I remember a dear brother who used to be continually quoting that Scripture wrongly and telling the Lord He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. That is not Scripture. We are bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. **Our derivation is from Him.** As the heavenly Bride, the Church's origin is from Him. This is a great mystery. Christ and the Church one, because just as Eve was builded out of Adam in that deep sleep, so the Church is builded out of Him—the members of His body, out of His flesh and out of His bones—one with Christ.

And then if we read in the Old Testament of the heart-break of God over His earthly people, so we can think of the sorrow of Christ when His people are beguiled. As reflecting His thoughts, the Apostle Paul says, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." It is a remarkable thing that as the later books of the Old Testament reveal the unfaithfulness of God's earthly people espoused to Him, the last book of the New Testament shows us the same evil principle working in the Church. The angel of the Church at Ephesus had a word from Christ saying, "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." That was true of the Church at Ephesus, but alas! alas! over and over again in the history of the Church has **this departure, that distresses the heart of Christ**, taken place. Brethren, as we contemplate the greatness of His love shall we not all seek grace that we may return to the first love?

We can thank God, however, that **Christ desires the Church.** You remember how the Psalm puts it, "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty," and Christ is the Man of patience, He is waiting till the hour comes when the presentation will take place in all the beauty of holiness. The desire is on His part, and is there desire on our part? Yes, there is, thank God! The book that began with the very first Church being rebuked for having lost its first love, ends by Jesus presenting Himself—"I, Jesus." There is much in Revelation that I do not understand, but there are two words I do understand, and they are, "I, Jesus." And the simplest believer understands them too. After the unrolling

of all the judgments of God, Jesus stands forth and presents Himself to His saints. He says, "Surely, I come quickly." His desire is for His Bride.

**Is the responsive desire in your heart, in my heart?** Yes, for "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." When Christ presents Himself, as the heavenly Bridegroom, in all the devotion of His wonderful, infinite, self-sacrificing love, leading us to the day when His Church will be displayed, without spot, without wrinkle, holy and blameless, surely there is a responsive desire in our hearts and we say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## THE LORD'S SECOND COMING.

J. HOUSTON

**T**HE Thessalonians were waiting in earnest expectation of the Lord's return. This hope had a wonderful, enlivening effect upon them, spurring them into activity in the Gospel and keeping them in paths of sanctification, zeal and brotherly love. They were an example to all around them; and the Apostle had real joy in the work the Spirit had wrought in them, in view of the day of glory.

**I. Turned to God from idols.**—The Apostle began his work in the synagogue. There the Jews met, and he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures (Acts 17: 1-4). The success of his mission was marked by the power by which he preached to them. "Our Gospel," he says, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy

**Ghost** (1 Thess. 1: 5). The effect was that they were "turned to God from idols (chap. 1: 9).

What stamped the Thessalonians from the beginning was their freshness and vigorous faith. To a large extent, the persecutions through which they passed, after they had believed, would have the effect of fanning the flame of love, and exercising their faith. "They received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (chap. 1: 6).

They waited for God's Son from heaven. Their waiting was not a passive thing. They were not looking up into heaven, and doing nothing on earth. They were serving the living and true God. Waiting for God's Son from heaven and working for God on earth go well together, for the simple reason, the believer's

hope is both ardent and active. Folded hands, sedentary habits, spiritual inertia, go badly with a living hope. A woman, waiting on the return of her husband, does not fold the hands, sit down and while away the fleeting moments; she is "up and doing," preparing everything for his welcome. So it is with the believer, who is waiting for the Lord's return.

2. **Crown of rejoicing.** — The Apostle now speaks of what the Thessalonians were to him, in view of the Lord's return. In that day they would be his "crown of rejoicing" (chap. 2: 19). It would be a great joy to him to see the Thessalonians in the presence of the Lord as the fruit of his labour. This was his hope as an honoured worker for God. Labourers look for the fruit of their labour. Their toil would be a thankless thing if no fruit came from it. It is in view of resurrection, at the Lord's coming again, "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15: 58). Well may we all labour with that in view!

3. **Unblameable in holiness.** — Nor did the Apostle only labour to get sinners converted to God; he laboured to get believers sanctified in the Spirit. In fact, the great work of the Spirit in believers is the work of sanctification. While it is perfectly true that a sinner, the moment he puts his faith in Christ, is saved, and sanctified—that is, set apart for God—and can therefore go straight to heaven, like the thief on the cross, since his standing is in Christ; yet, if he be left on earth, as a witness to Christ, the great work in him, by the Holy Spirit, is practical sanctification, and this in view of the Lord's return. "Every man that

hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3: 3).

Let it be asked, would the reader like the Lord to come upon him suddenly, and find him in a bad state, in bad company, in an ungodly place? We can give the answer, No. Well, it is for him to see that he is in a good state, in good company, in a godly place **now**. Some believers, who are careless about their walk, are ashamed when their fellow-believers see them in unbecoming company and places. What will they say, or do, when the Lord finds them there at His return? This is a pertinent question, and demands a candid and sober answer.

But to be "unblameable in holiness," at the Lord's return, does not simply mean to be **outwardly sanctified**; it means to be **inwardly holy**. Supposing one believer has a grudge against another, this is an unholy feeling, and ought to be put away. If allowed to remain, it will not only spoil communion with God, but will be an unholy thing in the heart, at the Lord's return. Let us see to it then that we have the heart cleansed from all unholiness, so that we can happily meet the Lord. The holiest feeling we can have is that of the Father's love, to ourselves and to others.

O Holy Father, keep us here  
In that blest name of love,  
Walking before Thee without fear,  
Till all be joy above.

4. **Comforting one another.** — The hope of the Lord's return gives us comfort when our loved ones fall asleep in Him. We bury their bodies in the hope of resurrection. This will take place in a moment, in "the

twinkling of an eye," at the Lord's return. We do not mourn as others, who have no hope. We mourn the loss of their company, for we surely miss them; but we do not mourn, as unbelievers mourn, who have no hope. We have comfort, when we think of the Lord coming in the air, and the dead in Him all rising from their graves, and we with them **all ascending to meet Him, and to be for ever with Him.** Perhaps this is the most blessed happening of all, for there we shall all be "for ever with the Lord." So uplifting is it, that we are moved to look up to heaven and say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

5. **Wholly Sanctified.**—However great the work of sanctification now, in the power of the Spirit, the whole work will reach finality at the Lord's return. In fact, all will have its culmination then, for all has that end in view. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (chap. 5: 23). We are tripartite beings. Our spirit, soul and body make the three parts. To

distinguish between soul and spirit is a difficult matter. Suppose, however, we put it in a very general way and said: The spirit is Godward; the soul is manward; the body is the temple of both. We certainly serve God **in spirit.** We worship Him too **in spirit.** We love our brethren **in soul.** Paul would have imparted not only the Gospel to the Thessalonians but **his own soul** (chap. 2: 8). Jonathan loved David **as his own soul.** The body is our earthly habitation now, and it is going to be changed into a body of glory, like the body of the Lord. Wonderful thought! All three parts of our being will be perfected for ever, when we are with the Lord.

To gather up the threads, in one connected whole, we have: (1) our conversion to God; (2) the labourer's crown of rejoicing; (3) our being established and presented unblameable in holiness; (4) our comfort concerning the departed brethren; (5) the final work of sanctification, ending in our presentation, spirit, soul and body, "wholly sanctified." Glorious hope! Well might we say again, "Come, Lord Jesus."

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## HIS LOVE AND APPROVAL

I ask you beloved, which would be most precious to you, which you prefer—the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you; the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is especially attached to Christ will respond—"the latter." Both will be ours, if faithful, but we shall value this most, and there is nothing that will so carry us straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

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When the eye rests upon Christ peace fills the soul, and a fixed eye means a straight path.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

## CHAPTER 2: 24—3: 17.

**I**N the church at Thyatira there comes into view "the rest;" that is, a remnant who can be distinguished from the mass. The words, "unto you" in verse 24 lack authority and only obscure the sense. The Lord now addresses Himself directly to this remnant, who are marked by negative virtues rather than positive, rather like the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. These had not endorsed Jezebel's doctrine and, being simple, had not known the depths of Satan that were in it.

So in this New Testament Jezebel, the counterpart of the woman with "painted . . . face and tired . . . head," of 2 Kings 9: 30, who mixed heathenism with Israel's pure religion, the depths of Satan were to be found! This need not surprise us, however, for at the end, when she changes her character somewhat, and in chapters 17 and 18 of our Book comes forth as the woman with Babylon on her forehead, the enormous evils that are in her come **to the surface**. In the days of Thyatira they were still **in the depths**. Though there were found God-fearing saints who had never seen these evil things, the eyes like a flame of fire searched all those depths. What a revelation it is!

It is lovely to see the Lord treating these true but undiscerning saints with a compassion far beyond anything that their better instructed brethren would be likely to show them. He only lays upon them this; that what they had they should hold

fast till He comes. This is the first mention of His coming in these addresses to the churches, and it clearly indicates that viewed from the prophetic standpoint, that which Thyatira indicates goes on to the end.

If they held fast what they had till His coming, they would also keep His works "to the end," and thus be overcomers, as verse 26 says. The promise to such is very significant. An itching desire to obtain power over the nations has characterized the Romish system ever since it came into existence, and in the course of the centuries there have been times when it attained to a partial success, though never wholly achieving it. Now in this very thing the Thyatiran overcomer shall share in the coming day. The Lord will take this power from His Father, and He will delegate it to His saints, who are to judge the world, as we read in 1 Corinthians 6: 2. What Rome has tried to grab before the time for its own glory shall be theirs by the gift of God. And further, "the morning star" should be given to them, which we understand as an allusion to the first move which the Lord will make in connection with His second advent—His coming into the air for His own. That will be as the harbinger of the coming day.

In this fourth church, and in the remaining churches, the call to the one who has an ear to hear comes at the end, after the special word to the overcomer. Viewing things prophetically, this is significant. It indicates that from this point those

who have ears to hear will only be found in the smaller circle of the overcomers. The enormities of the Jezebel system are so pronounced that the whole professing church is no longer addressed. The footing lost is not regained; not even when Philadelphia comes into review.

To Sardis the Lord presented Himself as the One who not only had the seven stars, as before mentioned, but also the seven Spirits of God. This is a fresh feature. In chapter 1: 4 they were said to be "before His throne," but now we learn they are in the possession of Christ. The fulness of spiritual power for the government of the earth, according to Isaiah 11: 2, is His. And not only power but vitality also; which was much to the point in dealing with this church which was dead, in spite of having a name to live. Death characterized their general state, yet there were things amongst them not dead, though ready to die, and these could be strengthened if they were watchful.

We cannot doubt that here we have, from the prophetic view-point, a remarkable delineation of that political type of Protestantism that sprang out of the Reformation. That the Reformation was on the whole a powerful work of the Spirit of God we entirely believe, yet we cannot but recognize that from its beginning it was weakened by a large element of worldly politics entering into it, coupled with much reliance upon earthly potentates, and even the force of arms. In result the worldly element largely strangled the spiritual, and in result the works of Sardis were not found "perfect [or complete] before God." Earnest

men of God laboured in it, but their works were arrested and never reached completeness. They had "received and heard" a good deal more than they ever translated into their works.

Sardis is called upon to remember these things that had been committed to them, to hold them fast, and to repent; that is, to judge themselves in the light of them, and this of course would lead to a fuller acknowledgement in their works of all they had received. If they did not thus wake up from among the dead and become watchful, they would have to face the coming of the Lord just as the world will. Sunk in spiritual death as the world, they would be treated like the world. But this remark shows that Sardis also will continue to the second coming.

Verse 4 indicates that alliance with the world means **defilement**. But there were a few in Sardis who had escaped this, and the promise to them seems to identify them with the overcomers of the next verse. Again here the virtue of the overcomer seems to be negative, but when the defilements of the world are the general thing it is no small thing to keep clear of it, and the Lord owns it. Their purity shall be manifested in a coming day; their names shall stand in the book of life, and be confessed before God the Father.

We do most certainly need an ear to hear these things, for a political Protestantism surrounds us and we are more likely to be affected by it than by the corrupt Romish system. Are we not conscious that, the flesh being in each of us, there is a continuous downward drag in favour of religion of a type that the world

understands and even patronizes? To overcome in Sardis must mean spiritual vitality, and purity as well.

To Philadelphia the Lord presents Himself in characters which are new, as far as this book is concerned. He is marked by that intrinsic holiness which repudiates all evil, the truth that exposes all unreality, and He has the key that controls every door. The reference clearly is to Isaiah 22: 20-23, where Eliakim is in some sense a type of the coming Messiah. Like Smyrna the Philadelphian Church was faced by opposition, and to know the Lord in these ways would be at once a challenge and a support: a challenge as they thought on His holiness and truth; a support as they realized that all was under His control.

The Lord knew their works, and like all the rest Philadelphia is judged on that basis. Not the creed we profess but the works we do is the crucial point. Indeed the works we do give the best index to what we really believe. Knowing their works, the Lord credited them with a little strength, with the keeping of His word and non-denial of His name. We may remember that in the farewell discourse to His disciples (John 14) the Lord emphasized both His Name and His Word. They were left with access to the Father in His Name, and His commandments and His word were given them to be kept.

As the dispensation of law drew towards its close Malachi was inspired to call upon the godly in Israel to remember all the statutes and judgments given through Moses, and in Luke 1 we find a pious couple "walking in all the commandments

and ordinances of the Lord blameless." As the prophetic view of the Church draws to its close similar things come into evidence. But even so, the Lord does not credit Philadelphia with strength that is great. He says, "a little strength," which we do well to remember. To keep His word, as far as it is known, and not to deny His name is not the maximum but the minimum to be expected of those who really love Him.

We have before observed that Smyrna and Philadelphia are the two churches out of the seven to whom no word of rebuke is administered: we now notice that both had to face the same kind of religious opposition. Those who are the synagogue of Satan, falsely claiming to be Jews, reappear. In Paul's day Satan was transforming himself into an angel of light, so it is no new thing for him to assume a religious garb. Smyrna was fortified against the revilings of these people, and Philadelphia is encouraged by the assurance that a time of vindication will surely come when the love of the Lord will be manifested. The true Philadelphian can have the assurance and enjoyment of that love, while waiting for the day when it will come to light in a public way.

This leads to what we have in verse 10. The day of vindication and manifestation is future, both for the Lord and His saints. The present is the day of His patience and of theirs, for He is not publicly interfering at present with the course of man's day. For the moment He has accepted the rejection which was meted out to Him, and He sits at the Father's right hand in patience, till the hour strikes when He is to

take the kingdom. The word of His patience has reached us, and we are to keep it by attuning our spirits and our whole manner of life to it. This the Philadelphian saints had done, and they are encouraged by the assurance that the Lord would differentiate between them and "them that dwell upon the earth," or "the earth-dwellers." These are a class of people that appear several times in this book—people akin to those who "mind earthly things," of whom Paul warns the Philippian saints. The Christian is called to be a "heaven-dweller," the exact opposite of this.

These earth-dwellers are of the world, and so they will have to face the governmental wrath of God which is coming on the world. From that the Philadelphian is to be exempted altogether. He will be kept not only out of the tribulation, but even out of the hour of it; that is, out of the limited period of time in which it falls. The great event described in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17 will take place—the first movement in connection with the Second Advent—and of that Advent verse 11 speaks.

The Lord acknowledges, then, that Philadelphia did have certain things in possession. His injunction to them is, Hold it fast! They were not a people of great strength, who might go from one conquest to another; or of great possessions, who might be steadily acquiring fresh stores of light and understanding. They were to hold fast what they had. No small task this! How frequently in the history of the church do we see Christians being robbed of what once they had under cover of the enticement to spend all

their energies in the pursuit of new things. It was in this way that the earliest heresies were introduced, as we see in 2 John 9; where the true reading seems to be "goes forward," and not "transgresseth." Those Gnostics did not abide in the doctrine of Christ under pretence of going on to more developed understanding.

The promise to the overcomer is couched in figurative terms. A pillar speaks of support, and on pillars inscriptions were made. The overcomer who had but little strength here, and was outside the synagogue of those who said they were Jews, is to be a pillar of strength in the temple of God and go no more out. He is to be descriptive of God, of the city of God, and of Christ Himself. Not until we get to chapter 21 shall we find the city of God described, but it is evidently a symbol of the Church as the centre of heavenly administration. The fourfold repetition of "My God," in this verse is very striking. God is known to us as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," and He is "the Father of glory" (Eph. 1: 17). In our verse that glory is in view, and we are associated with Christ, and through Him with God.

It is evident from verse 11 that what Philadelphia represents from the prophetic point of view goes on to the coming of the Lord. We believe that since each of the last four churches run on to His coming, they represent four phases or states which have developed in the order given, and which persist to the end. The Thyatiran phase can be definitely located in the Romish system and the daughter systems springing out of it. Equally Sardis can be

located in the political and national Protestantism that in later centuries was severed from the greater abominations of Rome. Philadelphia follows, but indicates a phase which cannot be located in just the same way. We cannot point to any body of believers, or group, which so displays the features we have been considering, that we can point to them and say, There is what Philadelphia represented. Many years ago now, certain believers did begin to think and say that they were Philadelphia, when one much wiser than themselves warned them that such claims would only eventuate in their becoming like Laodicea.

Equally of Laodicea we have to state that it does not describe some visible body that we can name, but rather it describes the sad phase or state which is to become very pronounced at the close of the story. During the past two hundred years there has been a gracious work of reviving in the professing church, which has brought to pass in not a few quarters such a measure of faithfulness and devotion as Philadelphia indicates, and God grant that we—writer and readers—may be amongst them. But within the last century this has been damaged by a stealthy counter-movement of the enemy, the feature of which has been the glorifying of man and the powers of his mind. It has blossomed forth in the so-called "higher criticism," which in its turn has led to that attitude to the whole faith of Christ which is summed up in the term "modernism." Men are so lifted up in their fancied sufficiency that they feel competent to criticise the Word of God rather than allow the Word to criticise them. They have a highly inflated opinion of themselves.

To Laodicea the Lord presents Himself in a threefold way. Not only are all the promises of God amen in Him; that is, they are steadfast and carried to their completion in Him; but He Himself is "the Amen." He takes it to Himself as a title, reminding us of the way in which Jehovah speaks of Himself twice in Isaiah 65: 16, as "the God of truth," literally, "the God of Amen." The Jehovah, in whom all is made verity, is the Jesus of the New Testament; and significantly the word verily, so often upon His lips, is really the word, Amen.

Connected with this, He is the faithful and true Witness. What He is, that He declares. The Church has been left in the place of witness, as is shown by each church in these chapters being represented by a candlestick; but alas, the adjectives faithful and true cannot be applied here. That in which the churches have failed—which failure is most pronounced in Laodicea—is found in its perfection in Him.

Thirdly, He is the beginning of the creation of God. Apart from Him therefore nothing of that creation can be known, and, as we shall see, in Laodicea He is standing outside. What part can they have then in that creation?

They have no part, as is evident, and that because two things characterized them. They were indifferent as to Christ, and inflated by self-conceit as to themselves. These are two very ominous features which should occasion much heart-searching with all of us. They abound in Christendom as it exists to-day, and we may very easily catch the infection of them.

Neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, is the verdict. Some centuries ago men felt deeply about the things of God. We cannot approve the violence both in speech and act that so often marked their controversies, yet we can admire their strong convictions. The present tendency is in exactly the opposite direction. Convictions are shallow. Everything can be tolerated; anything condoned. No heat is generated; no zeal displayed. Lukewarmness is fashionable. Men may teach what they please as to Christ, and it does not matter.

It is always the case that those who think much of Christ think little of themselves, while those who think little of Christ think much of themselves. Thus it was with Laodicea. They felt themselves to be rich, and making advances in wealth, and thus to be self-sufficient, having need of nothing. The wealth of which they boasted was not gold or silver but doubtless of a more intellectual sort. Modernism is the fashionable thing to-day, which claims to be the latest and most advanced thing in religious thought,

and far in advance of the cruder notions of earlier days. The taint of this has crept into circles where in days gone by it would have been wholly refused.

Laodicea not only felt this and thought this of themselves, but they boldly said it. They claimed it and proclaimed it. This in its turn proclaimed their own folly and obtuseness, and their claim is decisively rejected by the One who knew all their works. Smyrna claimed nothing, but the Lord knew their poverty and yet declared them to be rich. Laodicea claimed to be rich and is told its poverty in scathing terms—wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked. The language is most emphatic for the definite article precedes the adjectives — **the** wretched . . . . That means that they were all these things in a pre-eminent sense.

Here is an illustration of that great word, "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10: 18). Let us take good heed to it.

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## INFINITE LOVE

The Lord has come as Man bearing our griefs, so that I can say, "There's a Man I can trust. He has an ear to listen."

You never find an ear closed, an arm shortened, or a heart grown cold in Him.

He has come to call back our hearts to absolute confidence in infinite love.

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## THE FATHER'S BOUNTY

The prodigal son had a poor conception of the father's bounty, but it was just sufficient to bring him within reach of the outstretched hand of welcome.

# THE HOUSE OF GOD.

D. Ross

Notes of an address on Ephesians 2: 19-22.

**I**N speaking of the House of God, I am going to take the words House and Temple as meaning pretty much the same thing, though not exactly. The House is where God dwells and it has been the thought and purpose of God from the outset that He might dwell with His people. Do you remember, after His redeeming power had been manifested in bringing forth Israel out of Egypt's bondage, one of the first things He instructed His servant Moses to make was a sanctuary, a tabernacle, so that He might dwell amongst them. Then, when those same people reached the land of promise, it was put upon the heart of David that he should build a Temple, a dwelling place for Jehovah, and though he, because of his much bloodshed, was disqualified from building it, his thought was approved of, and later Solomon's temple was erected as a dwelling place for the Lord.

Now in both these cases God manifested His presence by the coming of the Shekinah cloud of glory. In the last chapter of Exodus when the tent of the congregation was finished, it says the cloud entered therein and so great was the glory that Moses could not stay in its presence. And the same thing happened when the temple was erected and God manifested His presence. The priests could not stand there; they had to leave the presence of God's glory.

Then again, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision and in it he saw the glory of the Lord rising from off the cherubim. The glory departed

from God's earthly house because the people that had the dwelling place were not a holy people, and holiness becomes the Lord. But in the end of the book he saw the glory of the Lord returning, so there is hope for Israel. The day is coming when God Himself will so purge His people and make them a holy nation, that He will be able to dwell amongst them and manifest His glory.

Now we come to the New Testament. What had happened to the temple there? It was the third temple that had been erected, and they called it the house of God, and the Lord Jesus even said, "My Father's house." But they had turned it into a house of merchandise, and He had to purge it. And then, at the end of His ministry, He went further and said they had converted it into a den of thieves. The only temple in which God dwelt when our Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth was the temple of His holy body, and to me it is interesting to notice the two words used in the first two chapters of John's Gospel. The Word became flesh and **tabernacled** amongst us and we beheld His glory. And then He said, "Destroy this **temple** and in three days I will raise it up." This He said speaking of His body. He and He alone was the dwelling place of God, for He Himself was very God.

But God's desire is to dwell with His people, and thus we read in Matthew 16 of the Lord Jesus Christ making a promise and telling of a purpose. He says, "I will build." Now we come to the building of God

—"My Church." When God delivered His people Pharaoh came after them and said, "I will pursue, I will overtake . . . my hand shall destroy them," and so it has been all through the ages. God is building and the enemy has sought to destroy, and sometimes we, in our little faith, think that the enemy has been successful in his efforts. But he is not and he will not be, because the Son of God said, "I will build My Church and the gates of hell [all hell's power] shall not prevail against it."

We sometimes get so occupied with the human builders and their faults and failings as to forget that after all, behind the failures of God's servants, Christ is building. God is the Architect, and what He builds will stand for ever. But when the Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian saints, and he refers to the Corinthian church as being God's building, God's temple, he then thinks of the servants who minister to that church. Now Paul, the master builder, was the human instrument God used to lay the foundation at Corinth and he says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And the foundation having been laid, other servants have to be careful as to what they are building on it. A man who professes to be a servant of God may build in bad material. That, of course, is not contemplated in Ephesians, where it is all God's handiwork and there is no failure.

In the Epistle to the Corinthians there is failure and he says, be careful what you build. There is good material—gold, silver, precious stones—and then there is wood, hay

and stubble. These Eastern cities were a curious mixture. Their public buildings were magnificent. Go to Athens or Corinth or Ephesus and see those wonderful masterpieces that have been the delight and admiration of succeeding generations, even in their ruins. There they were built with wonderful slabs of marble and the capitals at the heads of the pillars all decorated with gold and silver. But then the people lived in hovels made of boards of wood, blocked up with straw, and the roofs made of thatch. In the year 146 B.C. the Romans came to Corinth and set fire to the whole place and either destroyed the population or made them slaves. And the fire tested. The wood and the hay and the stubble went up in a blaze, but the fire could not destroy the wonderful marble pillars that stood there, and these pillars in many cases have defied the ravages of time. So every man's work will be tested. It is not a question of his salvation but of his work in connection with the people of God. Therefore, let those who minister see to it that it is Christ who is ministered, that the superstructure is of the same character as the foundation.

Don't misunderstand this word in Ephesians, "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Think of the monstrous pretension on which the Romish system is built, when they claim Peter as their foundation. Would you feel safe if you thought the Church was built on Peter? No. Peter is only a stone the same as any one of us. It is not on Peter, but on the One whom Peter discovered to be the Son of the living God. Anything that calls itself a church and is not built on

the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not a church at all. It may be religion, but it is not Christianity.

I suppose we all know these prophets do not mean the Old Testament prophets, otherwise it would have said, prophets and apostles, reversing the order. When you read in chap. 4 that God has given gifts, apostles and prophets, these are New Testament prophets and these were the people to whom God revealed the truth of Christianity. There are some very up-to-date people who say, Why should we of the twentieth century be bound by the ideas of the first century? For this reason, that in the first century the Word became flesh. The full and final revelation of God was made known to us in His Son. In natural science men have made wonderful progress, but not in the knowledge of God. Men have gone back because they are turning their backs on the revelation of God in Christ, and the apostles' doctrine. There must be growth and progress in apprehension of that doctrine, but when we leave it then we leave true, living, vital Christianity, which is the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Christ is the Builder, Christ is the Foundation Stone, but now you find that Christ is also the Corner Stone, which I understand is the key stone in the building, the stone in which all the lines of structure meet. The leaders of the Jewish people disallowed it, they rejected it. The prophet Isaiah tells us that God is going to lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; but Psalm 118 tells us that the stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner. There is a

Jewish tradition—I don't know whether it is founded on truth or not—that when the men were building Solomon's temple they came upon one stone that was so peculiar that they set it aside as useless, but at last they found that it was the chief corner stone. When brought before all the builders and leaders of Israel, Peter with boldness said, "This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." Everything hangs and depends and consists in Him. Christ is everything and all things to His church. It is grand to get away from men.

I had the privilege of speaking to a little company of Roman Catholics in a house in Belgium. And I thought, What can I say? They make a great fuss of Peter. Shall I turn them to Peter's word? And I told them that there is no salvation in any other name than the Name of Jesus. Not the Virgin Mary, not St. Joseph, nor all the multitude of saints that they revere. God was building in accordance with Christ. In Peter's epistle he speaks of our coming unto "a Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." We also as living stones are "built up a spiritual house." Here, in Ephesians, the Apostle Paul says it is in Him all the building is "fitly framed together." When Solomon's temple was being built everything was shaped before being brought to the site and the result was that the thing grew silently; there was no sound of any tool. It was according to plan, and every stone, large or small, had its place in that building, fitly framed together. I have gone into houses and have seen chinks in the wall, or the doors would not

open. They were not fitly framed together. But here in Ephesians it is all God's work and will stand every kind of shock.

I think I must have read thousands of books, and forgotten most of them, but there is one book I read when I was a boy that struck me very much. It was the story of the Eddystone Lighthouse. Winstanley built a lighthouse there, and he was so confident in his building that he said he would like to be in that lighthouse when the fiercest storm was raging. He got his wish and neither he nor his house was ever seen again. Then Smeaton built his lighthouse, and this book gave the details of how they shaped the stones and fitted them together so that they could resist every kind of stress and strain, and that building never collapsed, for it was fitted together. Our jerry-building of to-day is only for a generation, but in South America you come across temples built by the Incas for the worship of the sun, and though there is no mortar used, yet you could not put a penknife between the stones. And here is a temple fitly framed together. But it is a living thing, and it is growing.

I don't know that I can get a figure that would illustrate, but you have seen a house growing. Some of the great cathedrals of Europe took centuries to complete. Then again you might visit the South Sea islands and look down in the sea and you will see those fantastic temples that the coral has made, and it is made by living creatures. Death has to intervene, but there it is growing, growing, growing. And so this wonderful temple is growing because souls are being added. But it is not

only growing in extent, but in compactness, solidity, and in the Lord.

Now I have said that house and temple were not exactly synonymous; but also there are two words used for "temple," one takes in all the precincts, the courts and the house of the priests and so on, but there was a second, meaning a sanctuary, the shrine, the place of the Presence. That is the word he uses here. He had been reminding them of the quarry hole of sin from which they were digged in order that they might be built in as living stones into this wonderful temple, the place of the Presence. Think of that, for if it be a temple, the place of the Presence of God, what adjective alone can be applied to it? It is Holy. And that is why the apostle Paul, when he is speaking to the Corinthians about fellowship, association, partnership, says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for . . . what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." Now, if we are part of this holy temple, that will determine our fellowships, our associations, our partnerships, our whole manner of life. We form part of that which is holy.

In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul gives instruction how we are to behave ourselves "in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." Now that is slightly different, bringing in the thought of our responsibility and behaviour. And when are you in the house of God? Always. Have we got away from the idea of material building?—so as to realize that we are that house; and hence we are always

there, if we are there at all. It is a spiritual house, and in connection with the testimony it is the pillar and ground of the truth.

Where is the testimony to this wonderful "mystery of godliness" that, "God was manifest in the flesh"? It is in the Church. It is not enough for us to profess correct doctrine; there must also be that of which John speaks in his first epistle—"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." If we love one another, God dwells in us, and then our behaviour is bound to be such as becomes the house of God.

And now in Ephesians Paul says, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." While there are very definite proof texts as to the eternal Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole New Testament is to me one proof text since this doctrine is woven into its very texture. Listen to this, "Through Him [that is, Christ] we both have access by one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] unto the Father." In one text the Triune God. So in our verse: "in whom"—built on and built into the Son. But, "through the Spirit," as the Agent of this work, and it is for an "habitation," a permanent dwelling-place of God. Now there is no failure in this.

Although I have referred to different scriptures that speak of the building, each epistle has its own distinctive character, and in Ephesians we have entirely what God is doing, so there is no failure there. Other epistles bring in our responsibility, and there failure is seen. In Ephesians God is the Architect for it says, "We are His workmanship." God's workmanship in creation is a masterpiece of His wisdom and power, and it manifests His glory. But here we have another piece of workmanship, in the power of new creation, which will presently be manifested as His masterpiece—this wonderful church, built in the Son by the power of the Spirit for an habitation of God. In this there will be a manifestation of the exceeding riches of His grace, His all-varied wisdom; a display of His glory.

In closing, we may refer to the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, of which we read in the close of the Revelation, and which is a symbol of the church in the millennial age. We read, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." It has beautifully been said that the Shekinah and the glory of the Sanctuary have become one, and there is now nothing that is not Sanctuary. The Lord God and the Lamb being the Temple thereof, They are necessarily all in all.

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To run away from difficulties is not faith but unbelief, cowardice and unkindness to others. So act that you may honour God and serve others. The heart may say, "Impossible!" The Word says, "With God all things are possible," and again, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

Do not dread the future, or hold back from venturing on God.

# ABUSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

J. HOUSTON

**I**T is an astounding and humiliating fact that the spiritual gifts God has given to men, to gather together and feed his people, have been used to divide and impoverish them. That this is the avowed work of the enemy, we are all well aware; but we may not know, how easily **each one of us** can contribute to this fell work, **through our childish and carnal condition**. It needs full growth and true spirituality, to use aright these precious spiritual gifts.

When the Corinthians were endowed with spiritual gifts, they became very enthusiastic in using them. Sign-gifts, which were more spectacular than others, attracted their attention in a special way. The novelty, for example, of speaking in tongues took hold of them in such a manner that they created disorder in their assembly by their forwardness to use them. They were like children carried away with new toys. The Apostle gently reproved them: "Brethren, be not **children** in understanding . . . in understanding be men" (I Cor. 14: 20).

But their vanity assumed a still more harmful form. Some of themselves, who were outstanding in gifts, assumed the place of leaders, and dragged followers after them. In the bosom of the assembly parties sprang up, each one bearing the name of its respective leader. The result was, the assembly ceased to present a testimony to the unity which God had formed, and became, in reality, a spectacle of confusion.

The childish or undeveloped state of the Corinthians clearly shows that

the extraordinary endowment of spiritual gifts they possessed rendered them no real service. They were "babes," and needed "milk" (I Cor. 3: 1-4). Spiritual gifts to them brought no edification. The conclusion is, the possessors of those gifts did not minister to the upbuilding of the assembly, but to the satisfaction of their own vanity. As leaders of sects, they divided the assembly. This accounted for its state of undevelopment and impoverishment. A clear case of abuse of spiritual gifts.

There is, however, an underlying and fundamental principle in the bestowal and exercise of spiritual gifts which the Corinthians overlooked. It is that spiritual gifts are given **to**, and exercised **in**, the body. The whole of the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians is given to this subject. While these spiritual gifts are bestowed upon, and exercised by, individuals, it is all done within the sphere of corporate unity and action. Hence edification, as the result of the exercise of spiritual gifts, is corporate and not simply individual. Individualism is the bane of all that is corporate; consequently, the undoing of all that is for edification. "I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos," are words that reveal the real cause of the assembly's break-up, and the consequent scattering and impoverishment of its members. Bad it is, when the wolves enter into the assembly from without; even worse, when men arise from within, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after **them**" (Acts 20: 29, 30). Another case of abuse of spiritual gifts.

The human body is a perfect organism. It has all its members fitly placed, each one in relation to, and in harmony with, the other, and all in reference to the whole. The function of these members is orderly and corporately; for each ministers to the whole, and not merely to itself. The blood-stream flows through the whole, giving life and energy to all the members, and increase to each one in just proportion, so that growth is uniform and corporate. This is the best illustra-

tion we can get of the assembly, as Christ's body. It is the illustration used in 1 Corinthians 12.

Christ is the Head; the assembly, the body; the Spirit, the life-giving power that gives energy to all the members. Spiritual gifts are bestowed upon the members that function in the body. We hold "the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2: 19).

## THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

S. E. AZIZ

Notes of an address on 1 Peter 2: 5, and Hebrews 13: 15.

**T**HE priesthood of Christians is a subject of such great importance that it would be difficult to over-emphasize its value. It has been established according to God, and the knowledge and enjoyment of it will greatly sustain our hearts, as well as draw out our hearts in communion with Him, and in worship.

In the New Testament various terms are applied to believers. For instance, we are said to be,

Children of God or sons (John 1: 12).

Brethren of Christ (Hebrews 2: 12).

Saints, by God's call (Romans 1: 7).

Priests, unto God the Father (Revelation 1: 6).

The first two refer to new relationships established between us and the Father and the Son, and consequently one with another. The term saints refers to us as set apart

for God, in contrast to sinners, and as such our walk must be regulated by our title. This is shown by such verses as Ephesians 4: 1, and 5: 3.

But **priest** is an official title. We are made a kingdom of priests as those who are loved by Christ, and washed from our sins in His blood. Now Exodus 19: 6 shows that it was ever the desire of God to have a company on earth to minister to Him in the priest's office. He declared through Moses that the whole nation should be priests unto Him, but only if they obeyed His voice and kept His covenant. We know how they utterly failed in this; but even before this they were filled with fear and asked that an intermediary should be found. God acceded to their request and while Moses represented God to them, Aaron his brother was appointed to act as priest, and represent them before God. Thus priesthood was originated in Israel.

This order of priesthood, though divinely appointed, was earthly in character, and was established among a people who were under test as in the flesh, consequently it broke down and passed away. Everything that God has put into man's hand in responsibility on earth has failed, just as Adam failed when set in a garden with authority and dominion. But the priesthood that failed in Israel is perfectly fulfilled in Christ, and is to be fulfilled also in the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today, in the power of the Holy Spirit, on the basis of accomplished redemption.

Who then is a priest, according to the New Testament? All Christians, whether old or young, are such. They are born of God, they have come to the Saviour, they are justified from all things, they have the Holy Spirit. They need no other qualification. By Christ we have been made kings and priests; such is the spiritual nature of our priesthood.

If then we are priests, what sacrifices do we offer to God? In speaking of sacrifices our minds turn to Leviticus, the code book of the priests, for there we have the orderly presentation of the sacrifices offered under the law. These were material, oxen, sheep, etc., but they have long since ceased; and even David said, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire . . . burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required" (Psa. 40: 6). We are to offer "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." What suitable sacrifices can we bring? We do not possess anything in ourselves which is worthy of God. In us, that

is, in our flesh dwells no good thing, as the Scripture says.

Yet, as believers on the Lord Jesus we have been once purged and have no more conscience of sins; and again, as perfected for ever, there is no more remembrance of sins, and we are to draw near to the Holiest, as Hebrews 10 tells us. We must not appear before God empty-handed, but rather as those who are filled with what speaks to God of the excellencies and perfection of Christ. If then we have by the Spirit an intelligent appreciation of Him, and present this to God, the Lord, who is the great High Priest, will take our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and present it to God for His acceptance, as the antitype of the offerings of old.

There is now no brazen altar for us. Its sacrifices have ceased, since there has been the offering of the one true Sacrifice, the efficacy of which abides for ever. Only the golden altar remains for us now; that is, Christ Himself, by whom and through whom we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. This is the incense which delights God's heart. When Christ was on earth He was wholly delightful under the eye of God. If, occupied with Him, meditating upon Him, we speak of Him to God, that will delight Him too.

In conclusion, let me once more say that every Christian has this wondrous place as a priest, with unhindered access into the presence of God with his spiritual sacrifices. May God greatly enlarge our hearts in the apprehension of this precious truth.

## A METHOD THE BIBLE DOES NOT USE.

A. J. POLLOCK.

THE late Charles Reade, a well-known novelist in the early Victorian times, was happily converted, though late in life. He wrote an interesting book on the characters of the Bible, pointing out the great difference between the Bible method of presenting its characters, and that of the writers of biography and fiction.

In the writings of men we get such presentations as the following: "He stood well over six feet high, with noble head and white flowing locks, eagle eye, majestic alike in looks and manners." This is not the method of the Bible, and we may learn a great lesson therefrom.

In the Bible we get very little description of physical appearance, but more of moral characteristics, and even that very sparingly. For instance, take the case of the Apostle Paul. Of all the servants of the Lord in the New Testament he was the most remarkable, and yet we have no description whatever of his personal appearance in a favourable sense. The little he does say of himself is to report what his adversaries said of him, that, "his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10: 10). Tradition tells us something of his physical appearance, but the Bible never does so in the way of adulatory description, usual in the writings of men.

The account of the labours of this servant of Christ occupies more than half of the Acts of the Apostles. If we include the Epistle to the Hebrews, he was used of God to write fourteen inspired epistles out

of a total of twenty-one. These seven epistles written by four writers—Peter, John, James and Jude—occupy twenty-one chapters, whilst the epistles from the pen of the Apostle of the Gentiles occupy one hundred chapters. Paul has a dominating place in the Holy Scriptures. What is the last glimpse we have of this honoured servant?

Herein we may learn a great lesson. For two years he lived in Rome under light arrest, guarded by a soldier, in his own rented room, with the knowledge that martyrdom awaited him. He knew how to turn that humble room into a pulpit for the preaching of the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. There and in that occupation we see the last glimpse of that loved and honoured man.

Had uninspired pens been at work we should have had a dramatic description of his martyrdom, a vivid description of his appearance and behaviour in his last moments on earth. The manner and place of his burial would have been carefully described. But Scripture gives us not a word of this. Why? Is it not to teach us that God does not adulate the man, but honours him in his work. When his work is done, the curtain falls. Thus simply and beautifully he passes from the scene of his activity for the Lord.

Did not the Holy Spirit see that unholy elevation would be given to God's servants, canonizing them, calling cathedrals and churches after their names, using supposed relics for idolatrous worship? Would not

the last days of the great apostle have been filled with the sustaining presence of his Lord? Would the Lord not support him in his last moments upon earth? Is not the death of His saints "precious in the sight of the Lord"? (Psa. 116: 15). Surely the apostle would realise all this to the full, but that was between himself and his Lord. The last glimpse Scripture gives of this servant of Christ teaches us a very great lesson: a lesson of humility, and of the high honour it is to serve the Lord, and then to pass out of the sight of men.

Take the case of John the Baptist. We have an account of his food and clothing, and the place of his ministry, the wilderness of Judaea, in order to give the setting of his ministry, far away from the gorgeous ritual of the Temple, now empty of any spiritual vitality, presaging thus the reception our Lord would receive at their hands. Our Lord said that "among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11: 11). And yet we are not given one indication of his physical appearance. "He was a burning and shining light" (John 5: 35), but these were moral or spiritual qualities, setting forth his extraordinary zeal. Would that we could catch a breath of it these sad days!

We are told of Samson's strength, for that was part of his particular Nazariteship, and was used of God in His service. We read that "the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times" (Judges 13: 25; 14: 19; 15: 14). But of his physical appearance we have not a line.

The same can be said of Abraham, Moses, Elijah. We know that Elisha was bald-headed, but that was the taunt of the youths that mocked him, with sad consequences to themselves. We have King Saul's great stature mentioned to show that spiritual power is not measured by physical inches. He probably is a type of the wilful King of Daniel 11: 36, the Antichrist, the king of man's choice, who will seek to gain position by fleshly and natural means, behind which will lie Satanic power.

David, too, was described as "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to" (1 Sam. 16: 12). This is perhaps the fullest description of any of the Lord's servants that Scripture affords us. It shows that David was youthful, in the early blush of young manhood, in contrast with Saul's height, and David was a type of our Lord.

Other cases may come to the minds of the readers, but these are what occur to the writer.

We have reserved the greatest example to the last, even that of our Lord Himself. No words can exaggerate the greatness of His undiminished Deity, nor the graciousness of His stoop to man's estate, nor the affectionate solicitude of the Father as to His every word and action. And yet there is no account of His physical appearance given to us in the Scriptures. We do read that "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52: 14), a prophecy made centuries before our Lord was born at Bethlehem. The mind of the Spirit of God was filled with the

spiritual anguish that would be His, "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53: 3)—a spiritual anguish that marred His very features. Blessed Saviour!

The thought the writer has sought to place before his readers should have a subduing influence on us all, and place in the dust pride of face, or race, or place, that is so prone to feed the flesh in us. May we have the spirit of John the Baptist, who

said "HE must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3: 30). That sentence could not be inverted. It was not that John ceased to shine, but the shining of our Lord was like the shining of the sun that pales the stars, so that they are no longer visible, though they shine still in their own light. So may we ever give the Lord His place and then we shall with joy take ours, and that of His giving.

## High Pretensions Abased.

(See I SAMUEL 4)

Israel vainly imagined that the ark would do all for them, and great was their joy, though not well founded, when it made its appearance among them, accompanied not by Jehovah, but by the wicked priests, Hophni and Phinehas. "And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." All this was very imposing, but ah! it was hollow, their triumph was as baseless as it was unbecoming; they ought to have known themselves much better than to make such an empty display. Their shout of triumph harmonized badly with their low moral condition in the sight of God; and yet it will ever be found that those who know least of themselves set up the highest pretensions, and assume the highest position.

The Pharisee in the Gospel looked down with an air of proud indifference on the self-abased publican; he imagined himself very high up, and the publican very low down in the scale; yet how different were God's thoughts about the two! Thus it is, the broken and contrite heart will ever be the dwelling place of God, who, blessed be His Name, knows how to lift up and comfort every such heart as none else can do. Such is His peculiar work—the work in which He delights.

But the men of the world will always attach importance to high pretensions. They like them, and generally speaking, give a high place in their thoughts to those who assume to be somewhat; while, on the other hand, they will seek to put the really self-abased man still lower. C.H.M.

Cultivate a consciousness of God as a loving Father. Do not put trouble between you and God, but rather think of God as between you and the trouble, and live as one who belongs to God, controlled and directed by Him. Then each day you will prove His good and acceptable will.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

Chapters 3: 18—5: 6.

**T**HOUGH the claims of the Laodicean church are so decisively rejected, and its true state so unsparingly exposed, the grace of the Lord still lingers. In verses 18-20 it finds expression in a three-fold way.

First, there is the Lord's counsel to the church through the angel. There was still available for them "gold tried in the fire," "white raiment" and "eyesalve." They had been boasting in their riches, of which gold is the symbol, but their fancied wealth had not yet faced the fire. When their "goods" went up in smoke, their pretensions would perish. But fire only refines true gold, while it consumes all the gaudy human things that glitter. They needed a righteousness which was **divine** in its origin, when the vain things of their own imaginings would be seen by them in their worthlessness.

Later in this book "white linen" is used as the symbol of "the righteousnesses of saints." Only the saint, who stand in righteousness before God, as justified in Christ, can produce these acts of righteousness in daily life. The Laodiceans, pleased with themselves and their acts, might imagine themselves to be well clothed, but in reality they were naked. Raiment of a sort they might have: the white raiment they had not.

And, worst of all, they were so blind that they did not see their own desperate need. When on earth the Lord had said, "The light of the

body is the eye . . . . when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (Luke 11: 34, 35). A sad illustration of that is before us. They doubtless boasted of being rich in "light" amongst their other possessions, but in reality they were full of darkness; blind as to themselves and as to the Lord, and thus needing the eyesalve.

The Lord's counsel is, "Buy of Me" these necessary things. He is the only Source of them, and in speaking thus He was using the figure which occurs in Isaiah 55, at the mouth of Jehovah, where every thirsty one is invited to buy without money or price. Absence of thirst was the trouble at Laodicea, yet that did not alter the fact that all they needed was to be obtained from the Lord on the same gracious terms. In the New Testament Jesus speaks in just the same absolute way as Jehovah did in the Old.

Second, the rebuking and chastenings of the Lord are an expression of His grace. This is a point which comes to light in Scripture from the early days of Job, yet it is one very easily overlooked, if we get infected by the spirit of self-satisfaction, such as characterized Laodicea. There was a minority who were like that "afflicted and poor people," of whom we read in Zephaniah 3: 12. These are in contrast with "them that rejoice in thy pride" and are "haughty," spoken of in the previous verse. The majority at Laodicea were of this haughty type,

yet they did not come under the rebukings and chastenings as did the minority. It is thus in our day, which is very Laodicean in character.

Because of this the haughty majority may feel themselves greatly fortified in their position. They may point out that the minority never seem to prosper as they do, but always to be in trouble, and under the governmental hand of God. It looks therefore as if the minority is disapproved, and by contrast they are the approved ones. Did we ignore the uniform teaching of Scripture we might think so too. But the reverse is the fact. The discipline comes on "as many as I love," that it may stir them to zeal and repentance. A zealous man is one moved to warmth of desire, the very opposite of lukewarmness. Repentance is the opposite of the self-satisfaction, which characterizes the haughty. The spirit of Laodicea is very strong in this our day, so it behoves us to pay much attention to these solemn words of our Lord.

Verse 18, then, is counsel to the haughty majority; verse 19 is discipline for the poor minority. But between the two a certain number may be found that it would be difficult to classify. They are not rooted in pride as the former, nor can they be distinctly identified with those who are Christ's and loved by Him. So, third, there is for such this gracious invitation and offer. The Lord is outside the door but knocking. He is excluded from that which professes to be His own church! What a tragic situation, and what a descent from that departure from first love, which was seen in Ephesus! The final end of this will

be utter repudiation. At His second Advent there will be a fulfilment of the word, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," for they will be wholly nauseous to Him. While He lingers, some may be found who have ears to hear His voice as He knocks and calls. For such there is hope in His grace.

The invitation is very inclusive. "If **any man**;" nothing could be wider than that. The only limitation is the having ears to hear His voice, and consequently a readiness to open the door to Him. This done, He will enter to commune with us in our small circumstances; and then lift us to commune with Him in His large circle of pleasure. This is a mighty privilege indeed! Let us be sure that we embrace His offer and enjoy it. It is also a strong evangelistic appeal for the last days, when so many are Christian as regards outward profession and yet lack all reality and life.

There will be those who overcome even in Laodicea. Repentance and reality will mark such, the result of hearing the Lord's voice, and they will be associated with Him in His throne. He overcame—in His case over all the power of evil that assailed Him from **without**—and is associated with His Father in His throne. Those who hear His voice, while He is in the outside place as regards a lukewarm church, will be associated with Him in the inside place in the day that is to come.

The last verse of the chapter must remind us once more that what the Spirit says to each church is not for that church alone, but for everyone who has an ear to hear. Judgment begins at the house of God, and the

state of each church is severally scrutinized, yet the Lord's pronouncement as to each sheds valuable light which shines for all. What is necessary correction for one church is wholesome for all, if they have ears to hear. What is local is thus happily blended with what is universal.

The first verse of chapter 4 is, we judge, a very important one. It introduces the unveiling of "the things which must be hereafter;" that is, according to chapter 1: 19, the third section of the book. The vision now takes a fresh departure, and John sees a door opened in heaven and hears an authoritative call to come up into heavenly scenes. Being, as he tells us, "in the Spirit," all that he experienced and saw had to him a vivid reality, and though a vision it conveys prophetic realities to us.

In the first place, then, John's own position was changed. He left earthly scenes for heavenly, so that he might view thence the Divine dealings with the earth in judgment. This change has symbolic significance, we believe. Chapter 3 ends with, "the churches," and these two words do not occur again until chapter 22: 16 is reached; that is, the churches do not appear right through the unfolding of "the things which must be hereafter." The church as a whole is symbolized in chapter 19: 7, and again in 21: 9, as "the Lamb's wife," but she is then manifestly in her heavenly seat. The catching up of John into heaven is symbolic of the rapture of the church, as detailed in 1 Thessalonians 4: 17, and from this point begins the vision of things that take

place on earth after the church is gone.

Next, we notice that before John is permitted to view the governmental judgments of God on the earth, he is shown the secret spring of all. In the coming day of the Lord, men cannot fail to see and feel the judgments, but they will be in the dark as to whence all proceeds. Now we are not to be ignorant of this, and so this chapter and the next are occupied with John's vision of the heavenly scenes and of the One in whom all judgment is vested. The record of what he saw furnishes us with a picture of the heavenly world in solemn session, preparatory to judicial action on earth.

John's attention was claimed first by the central throne and by Him that sat on it. He did not see heaven as "My Father's house" (John 14: 2), the eternal home of the saints, but as the seat of authority and rule, and the Divine glory appeared to him as the rays of precious stones. Such stones reflect the light—the glory of God, which in itself is a light too bright for mortal eyes. The throne of judgment was, however, encircled by a rainbow, showing that in judgment God remembers His promise of mercy, as in Genesis 9: 13. Yet the rainbow was of a supernatural sort, of one colour, and that a tint not seen in the rainbows of our present world.

Then twenty-four lesser thrones encircled the central throne, and on these sat elders in the white raiment of priests, but crowned as kings. At once we perceive a resemblance to what Daniel saw some six centuries before, when he says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down," or

rather, " were set, and the Ancient of days did sit " (Daniel 7: 9), and then not only did One like the Son of Man have the dominion but, " the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom " (7: 18). So here there is a sight not only of God, the supreme Ruler, but of the complete kingdom of priests, who are to judge the world, according to 1 Corinthians 6: 2. We identify the elders with the saints raised at the first resurrection, and their number corresponds with the 24 courses into which David divided the descendants of Aaron—the priestly family under the law. Twelve is the number of administration, and so 24 suits the priestly company, composed of both Old Testament and New Testament saints, now glorified together.

Verse 5 declares that the throne is characterized not by grace but by judgment, yet judgment which is to be executed in the full light of the Spirit of God. In chapters 2 and 3 the churches were each a " candlestick," or " lampstand," and the Lord was He who had the seven Spirits of God. Now the seven Spirits of God burn as lamps before the throne, illuminating the course of the Divine judgments. The "sea" is there, not filled with water for cleansing, as once in front of the Temple, but of glass, speaking of a state of fixed purity, and " in the midst " and " round about " the throne, as supporting it, were four " beasts," or " living creatures." There are strong similarities to the living creatures of Ezekiel 1, who later in that book are called cherubim. There are differences also: for instance, there only four wings are mentioned, whereas here there are six wings, agreeing rather with the

seraphim of Isaiah 6.

The first mention of cherubim, in Genesis 3: 24, certainly conveys the impression that they were some kind of angelic being. On the other hand Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4 and 5 are records of visions granted to prophets, and the living creatures appear to be rather symbolic of God's governmental actions in the sphere of creation. God's ways have the strength of the lion, and endurance of the ox, the intelligence of a man, the swiftness and elevation of an eagle. The living creatures are also " full of eyes," not only before and behind, but also within—they scrutinize all the future, and all the past, and the deep internal secrets of the ways of God. Hence they contribute to His praise, giving glory and honour and thanks to Him continually, declaring Him to be the thrice Holy, who lives for ever and ever. **Thrice Holy**, notice! Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

As the living creatures give thanks the elders fall in worship, casting their crowns before the throne. They ascribed all glory, honour and power to the Lord on the ground of His creatorial work and supremacy, and thus very suitably they dis-crowned themselves. Since all things came into being for His pleasure, His judgments must now operate to rescue for His pleasure all that had been marred by sin. But something more than creating power and cleansing judgment is needed. That something chapter 5 brings before us, even the redeeming blood of Christ.

The book in the hand of Him who

sat on the throne, written on both sides and sealed with seven seals is evidently the book of judgment, now completed by man's sin. Men had filled to overflowing the cup of their iniquity, the record was complete, but as yet the seals restrained. Who was worthy to break the seals? This was the question now raised. The judgment is richly deserved, but who can execute it?

This was the question raised in the incident recorded in John 8: 1-11. The sinner was undeniably guilty and the law explicit. But who was there so clear of every charge under the law as to be worthy to execute this sentence? All the accusers slunk away, and the only worthy One declined the office at that time. His mission then was to save and not to judge. Now however the hour of judgment is come and He is about to act.

In the vision John wept much. He did not rejoice at the thought of judgment against evil failing by default of a worthy executioner. The very reverse: it outraged his feelings to imagine that it should fail in this manner. We know that, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed **speedily**, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set

in them to do evil" (Eccles. 8: 11). It would be a crowning calamity if it were **never executed at all**, and John might well weep at the thought of this. The elders, however, were in the secret of heaven and one of them gave John the key to all. It is by a Man that God is going to judge the world in righteousness, and that Man has prevailed and acquired the title to do it. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, an allusion to Genesis 49: 9, 10, and at the same time the Root of David—not merely the Offspring of David, but the Root, from whom sprang all David's authority and victory. The title to the crown was His to begin with. It is doubly His as the Overcomer. The closing verses of Psalm 78 indicate how definitely God's purposes for the government of the earth centre in David and Judah. All failed in David's immediate successors, for he had to lament, "Although my house be not so with God" (2 Sam. 23: 5) and yet all is accomplished in Christ. Nothing fails.

The Lion of Judah, then, has prevailed, and so is worthy to open the book of judgment. But how did He prevail? Verse 6 tells us. It was by dying as the Lamb of sacrifice.

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Grace has this character: it is not simply love (it is perfectly love, but it is not simply love); it is love acting where evil already is, and towards that which is evil. There is perfect love between the Father and the Son, but that is not grace. God loves the angels, but you cannot call that grace. Grace is the exercise of that same perfectly holy love towards that which is totally unworthy of it. It is this new wonder come out—love acting when the occasion for it was in the faults and sins of those toward whom it acts.

# CHRISTIANITY IN FUNCTION.

A. J. POLLOCK

**T**HE Acts of the Apostles holds a very unique place in the New Testament. It is the link between the four Gospels and the Epistles. Moreover it does not contain an orderly exposition of the doctrines of Christianity. It is a book of action and movement and shows how Christianity began to function. It proclaims the great power of the Gospel, insomuch that the rulers cried out when the Apostle Paul and his companion came to Thessalonica, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17: 6).

It is still more remarkable that our Lord Himself gave an epitome of the book as recorded in the compass of two verses. When His disciples asked when He would restore the kingdom of Israel, He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1: 7, 8). These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus just before His ascension to glory; the last recorded words He spoke on earth.

When we turn to the Acts of the Apostles we find how the Divine programme was literally carried out. That the gospel was first preached in Jerusalem is manifest. Chapter 2 records Peter's remarkable address to the vast crowds gathered to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem, and how about three

thousand souls were added to the believers in one day. "Beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24: 47) was the divine commission, the city of His murderers. Such is the grace of God!

The Apostles were flung into prison for the crime of preaching the gospel, but the angel of the Lord delivered them. Brought before the council of the Jews, who would have killed them if they could, but listening to the wise counsel of Gamaliel, they commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Despite this command, they nevertheless went on with the good work, and ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. The work doubtless spread to Judaea, for when persecution broke out we find the believers were scattered from Jerusalem, and went everywhere preaching the word. So the devil, trying to stop the preaching of the word in one city, caused it to be preached in many cities and villages in Judaea.

This was about the time of the death of Stephen, the first recorded martyrdom in the Acts. In the parable of the talents, which our Lord spoke on earth, he said, "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19: 14). In the martyrdom of Stephen we see this message sent after our Lord's own rejection by the nation. As if to confirm the message of rejection, Stephen's death is followed by that of James, and though not recorded in the Acts, we know that Peter, Paul, and all the apostles of which there is any historical record, save

John, were put to death for Christ's sake.

It is remarkable that the first mention of the Apostle Paul is in connection with the stoning of Stephen for, we read, the witnesses laid their clothes at "a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (Acts 7: 58). Further, in the vision that Stephen had of heaven, he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Why **standing**? In another Scripture (Heb. 10: 12) we read that our Lord **sat down** on the right hand of God, having completed the work of redemption. There is, however, no contradiction here. Our Lord **sat in** relation to the finished work of redemption. The work was done. His standing, as Stephen saw Him, sets forth a very touching truth, that the Lord lingered over His ancient people in wonderful grace.

This is born out in more than one way. When the Sanhedrim commanded the Apostles not to teach in the name of Jesus, Peter and the other apostles replied boldly, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 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 5: 29—31). Please note that the Lord in heaven, raised from the dead and exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, is there to give repentance to **Israel**. This shows how God lingered over His ancient people. It is true that the commission of our Lord to His eleven disciples was to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19), yet the Apostle Paul could point out that

whilst he was the apostle of the uncircumcision, of the Gentiles, Peter was the apostle of the **circumcision**.

Even the Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, could write of the Gospel that he preached, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew **first**, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1: 16). Again and again we find Paul going first to the synagogue, following out the divine thought, "to the Jew **first**." We append a few Scriptures to this effect. "When they [Paul and his companions] departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue" (Acts 13: 14). "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they [Paul and Barnabas] went to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14: 1). "And Paul, as his manner was, went unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures" (Acts 17: 2). "And he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (Acts 18: 4).

Our Lord seems to put a time limit in His dealing with Israel on these lines. In the parable of the vineyard, after narrating how the servants were maltreated, and sent away empty when they came to receive the fruits of the vineyard, we have the very touching words, "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son" (Matt. 21: 37). But when they caught the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard, the question

arose, What shall be done to these husbandmen? "They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons" (Matt. 21: 41). This was fulfilled when Titus besieged Jerusalem in A.D. 70, 1,100,000 Jews perishing, and the rest being dispersed among the nations, fulfilling the prophecy of Scripture, "And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen" (Deut. 4: 27). They have been dispersed among the nations from that day to this, though within the last century there are manifest signs of their return in unbelief to their own land in fulfilment of the Scripture prophecies, that this will happen in the last days.

We must be careful to note that God did not seek to perpetuate the system that crucified Christ. When there was an attempt to bring in Judaism and the law as a complement to Christianity, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian assemblies in vehement condemnation of this subtle movement, which instead of being complementary was indeed absolutely subversive of Christianity, so much so, that if any preached any other gospel than Paul preached, let him be accursed.

No, any Jew, converted after our Lord ascended and the Spirit was given, would cease to be a Jew religiously, and would become a Christian, and form part of the Church of God.

Then we come to the record of three most striking conversions, doubtless samples of many others unrecorded. The story of the con-

version of the Ethiopian eunuch is found in chapter 8; of Saul of Tarsus, in chapter 9; of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, in chapter 10. After the flood the world was peopled by the descendents of the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham and Japheth. The descendents of these three form three well-defined streams of the world's population, accepted generally by philologists.

The Ethiopian eunuch represented the family of Ham; Saul of Tarsus the family of Shem; and Cornelius, the Roman centurion, the family of Japheth. It is not a little remarkable that this is so, that without parading the point, it nevertheless shows how God would reach all mankind with the message of the gospel of the grace of God. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. 25: 2). The Ethiopian eunuch would carry the news to his dark heathen country. There is to this day a Christian church in Ethiopia (Abyssinia), whose beginning is lost in the mists of antiquity, and many think it owes its origin to the eunuch's conversion. Note Philip, who was used to his conversion, was at the time preaching in Samaria, one of the places mentioned by our Lord as a place where the gospel was to be proclaimed.

We know from the Acts of the Apostles how Saul of Tarsus carried the gospel to "the uttermost parts of the earth." His conversion was most remarkable, and he got a start in Christian service that never slackened till he laid his weary head on the executioner's block. One blow, and the weary warrior was in the ineffable presence of his Lord and Saviour, his course well run.

The Apostle Paul was undoubtedly the chief agent in carrying the gospel to "the uttermost parts of the earth," as predicted by our Lord. The last we see of this Great-heart is dwelling in his own hired house, a prisoner manacled to a soldier, awaiting the headman's axe under the cruellest of the Roman Emperors. Though a prisoner, and not able to move about, yet he served the Lord within the four walls of his hired lodging, preaching the kingdom of a God and teaching those things, which concern the Lord

Jesus Christ. The kingdom was still preached, a kingdom in mystery (for the King had been crucified by the Jewish nation) waiting for the King to bring it into manifestation, which He will do when He comes to reign upon the earth, and establish a true New World Order so much talked about at this time.

Till that day comes, may He be in each one of our hearts, and may the true New World Order begin in our own hearts, and be seen in our individual lives.

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## DRINKING THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPELS

We see the height of our calling—that we are called upon to follow the example of our Lord and Master, and to go through this world with His spirit and temper. Now, nothing is so likely a means to fill us with His spirit and temper as to be frequent in reading the Gospels which contain the history of His life and conversation in the world. We are apt to think that we have sufficiently read a book when we have so read it as to know what it contains. This reading may be sufficient as to many books, but as to the Gospels we are not to think that we have ever read them enough, because we have often read and heard what they contain. But we must read them . . . not to know what they contain, but to fill our hearts with the spirit of them. There is as much difference betwixt reading and reading as there is betwixt praying and praying. And as no one prays well but he that is daily and constant in prayer, so no one can read the Scriptures to sufficient advantage but he that is daily and constant in the reading of them. By thus conversing with our blessed Lord, looking into His actions and manner of life, hearing His divine sayings, His heavenly instructions, His accounts of the terrors of the damned, His descriptions of the glory of the righteous, we should find our hearts framed and disposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Happy they who saw the Son of God upon earth converting sinners and calling fallen spirits to return to God! And next happy are we who have his discourses, doctrines, actions and miracles . . . preserved to fill us with the same heavenly light, and lead us to the same state of glory.

WM. LAW.

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Diligence in the things of God brings spiritual prosperity.  
When the mind is filled with God's things, joy fills the heart.

# THE SINGERS IN THE FRONT LINE.

(2 Chronicles 20: 21)

D. W. PATERSON

**J**EHOSHAPHAT'S history is interesting. He started well, walking in the first ways of his father, David, as chapter 17 recounts. Then in chapter 18 he joined affinity with Ahab; a bad mistake with very unhappy results. But in the next chapter we find that he was exercised by the rebuke of the word of God, and he brought back the people to the Lord God of their fathers.

Then, chapter 20, at the height of this spiritual recovery trouble came. The kingdom of Judah was invaded by Moab, Ammon and others beside, forming a great host. The soul of the people was stirred and exercised and they immediately turned to God. Presently, waiting upon God, they got that excellent word of assurance, "Fear not, nor be dismayed, tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you." They did not go to sleep however. Indeed, they rose up "early in the morning."

Now comes the point that is before us. Jehoshaphat consulted with the people and appointed **singers unto the Lord**. Moreover "they went out **before the army**;" that is, he put them into the front line; and they were to "praise the beauty of holiness," and to say, "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth for ever." A remarkable army that!

But see how it worked, for the God that they praised acted on their behalf and as for the enemies, "they were smitten . . . every one helped to destroy another . . . none

escaped." The victory was so complete that the people "were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much."

So, brethren, in our day let us also be full of the praises of our God. It marks our Lord, who is now in the glory. Take the three Psalms, 22; 40; 69; each of them portraying the Lord in His path of suffering here, yet each indicating that He comes forth with a song of praise. In Psalm 22 we see Him as the sin offering, yet He says, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." In Psalm 40, He is the burnt offering, and we read, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." In Psalm 69, the trespass offering, we find, "I will praise the name of God with a song." Note particularly the "**our God**," of Psalm 40, for this indicates that others are to be linked with Him.

Corroborating this, we may notice that rejoicing in the Lord is a powerful antidote to spiritual ills. In Philippians 3, we find trouble threatening from **without**, and the word is, "Rejoice in the Lord." In chapter 4, trouble is threatening from **within**, and again comes the same word, twice repeated, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." It is clear, therefore, that we are to rejoice in the Lord, and sing, whatever the circumstances may be.

Thus, in the Old Testament, Habakkuk addressed himself to "the Chief Singer," though faced

with distressing circumstances. And in the New Testament Paul and Silas sing in the prison. It is deeply touching also to remember that it was "when they had sung an hymn," that Jesus and His disciples

"went forth to the Mount of Olives."

We too must learn to say, "The Lord is my strength and song." (Psalm 118: 14).

## GRACE IN THREE ASPECTS.

J. HOUSTON

IT is an interesting and edifying study, to follow the various ways in which God brings His grace to man. It is the same God, the same grace, and the same Saviour through whom it comes; but it has different ways in its application to man's need, as we shall see, as we view it in the three following aspects.

**1. Grace in relation to the Person of Christ.**—John sees Christ, the Word made flesh, "full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14). Here it is not a question of man's need, occupying the evangelist's mind, but what was seen in the incarnate Word, in reference to His glory. "We beheld His glory . . . full of grace and truth."

In the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, grace is seen, in reference to man's need; for Christ is presented in them, as coming to man, to be received by him, having grace in Himself, to heal all man's infirmities, and meet his deep need. In John, however, man is viewed as having rejected Christ from the very beginning, and therefore Christ's own glory, as God's Son, is ever before the writer. If Christ turns water into wine, it is to show forth His glory, and not simply to meet a need at the marriage feast. If He raises Lazarus from the grave, it is

that He may be glorified as Son of God. What we have in John is, not the Messiah, as in Matthew; nor the Servant, as in Mark; nor the Son of Man, as in Luke; but the Word incarnate, God's Son.

When it says, Christ was full of grace and truth, it simply means, grace, in its own divine fulness, was in Him. He was the very fount, or source, of all grace. The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came to be by Jesus Christ. In fact, grace and truth had not existed in their fulness till Christ came, and was manifested in flesh. He was the very embodiment of grace and truth. It does not mean that God had not been gracious to man, before Christ came; we know that He was, for many found grace with Him. But grace and truth, in their fulness, were not, till Christ came; He was full of grace and truth, and in Him these came to be, that is, came into existence as regards man.

What a glory there is in Christ, viewing Him as full of grace and truth! "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Drawing from His divine fulness, we have "grace upon grace." Just as from the mighty deep, we see wave upon wave advance, as the flowing tide comes in, so we see infinite grace flow from

Him, to fill us to overflowing! Such is grace in relation to Christ.

**2. Grace in relation to the kingdom.**—Peter, in his first Epistle, gives us grace in relation to the kingdom. He tells us that the prophets, in the Old Testament, prophesied of "the grace that should come." The Spirit of Christ was in those prophets, and they foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Then Peter explains that they did not prophesy concerning themselves, but in reference to the gospel, which was preached by the apostles, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Whereupon he exhorts his Jewish readers (he was the apostle of the circumcision) to gird up the loins of their mind, and to be sober, hoping for the grace that was to be brought to them, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This grace had a **past** and **future** aspect: past, in that it was prophesied by Old Testament prophets; and future, in that it looks forward to the setting up of the kingdom, at the revelation of Christ.

But it has a **present** aspect, and it is with this we are now concerned. Though Peter wrote to **Jews**, they were nevertheless **Christians**, and as such they suffered for Christ's sake. Their dispersion was the result of persecution. So that, in very deed, they were followers of Christ in His sufferings, and would, of course, be partakers of His glory, when His kingdom would be set up.

There are three references to grace in the Epistle, to which we would draw attention, for they are important in Christian testimony. First of all, Christians come to Christ, the living Stone, and they taste that the Lord is gracious (2: 1—3). There

they begin their pathway as subjects of the kingdom. This stands in contrast to the Jews, coming to Mount Sinai, where thunderings and lightnings filled them with terror. Their position, then, was altogether different, when they came to Christ, the living Stone, tasting that God was gracious. In Christ they were built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. One cannot help noticing that they were viewed still as Jews (though Christians), and in connection with Jewish promises and prophecies. For instance, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." And again, "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (2: 9, 10).

Secondly, grace is seen in reference to the domestic circle. The wife was a joint-partaker with the husband of "the grace of life" (3: 7). This would show that grace could change the home into a miniature kingdom of Christ; that is, Christ reigning in the home. In fact, the kingdom of Christ now, before its actual manifestation, is Christ reigning in the lives of His people, and that in reference to all the relationships of life in which they are found.

Thirdly, grace is ministered by one to another, each one being viewed as stewards of "the manifold grace of God" (4: 10, 11). God gave His oracles through some, who would be prophets; and He gave ability to others, to minister His manifold grace. All was to be done in reference to God, the source of

all grace, to whom be glory.

In conclusion, Peter commends them to "the God of all grace," who had called them to eternal glory, **after they had suffered a while**. Notice, that suffering is before glory. This is how the kingdom is presented. In a final postscript he says, "This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (5: 10—12).

### 3. Grace in relation to the Church.

—Paul is spoken of as one to whom a special administration of grace was committed. He calls it, "the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me." Again, referring to the same thing, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship [administration] of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3: 1, 9).

In the administration of His grace, Paul was the chosen vessel. It had to do with the Church, which proceeded from the counsels of God. Neither John, nor Peter, nor any other New Testament writer, had anything to say about this mystery. It is revealed, of course, to the apostles (Eph. 3: 5), but Paul was the administrator of it to the Church, by special calling (see Colossians 1: 24, 25).

Grace in relation to the Church, as we have it in Ephesians, excels anything that has been revealed. It has reference to **the counsels of God**. Grace in connection with these counsels must be of the fullest

measure, if, indeed, we can speak of it thus. No richer exposition of grace can be found than what is given in Ephesians; therefore, it behoves us to study it well. Let us briefly review it, especially in the opening chapters.

When it states we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before God in love; also predestinated to be before God, in the relationship of sons; all is said to be "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Moreover, in that same grace, we are accepted (graced) in God's Beloved. In Him, too, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. We cannot help being transported when we think of grace such as this.

Coming to chapter 2, we are quickened from the dead with Christ; raised with Him; seated with Him in the heavenlies; "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." We cannot fail to see in all this, it is not a question of answering to man's need, but of rising to the pinnacle of God's glory. So we can understand what is written, "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (3: 21).

Our need may be great, and grace has met it in every way. From the moment we are taken up, sustained all along life's pathway, and ultimately presented faultless in glory, grace is the unfailing source of all our strength and blessing. If sin

should abound, grace will overabound; for grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ. But far above all this, however great we may estimate grace in relation to ourselves, God's glory soars higher and higher, and the highest conception we can have of grace, is in relation to His glory.

This we see in the Church.

May grace, free grace, inspire  
Our souls with strength divine;  
May ev'ry thought to God aspire,  
And grace in service shine.

Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise.

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

These are said to kiss each other. It is a beautiful poetic expression of the harmonious unity in which they are seen (see Psalm 85: 10). Of course, they are thus united in Christ, and secured for His people in Him, as all other things are, that are essential to God's glory and His people's blessing. In the Psalm referred to, a number of things unite, such as mercy, truth, righteousness, peace, and that in connection with His people's salvation. Thus it will be when Christ reigns—**everything will be secured in Him for God's glory and His people's blessing.**

Frequently we see in hymns, and in writings, allusions to righteousness and peace kissing each other. We hear too in prayer meetings thanksgivings to God for the same thing. The general conception is that they were united at the Cross when Christ died. While this is true, from a doctrinal point of view, since the Cross is the basis of everything in all new covenant blessings, it is not the thought presented in Psalm 85. There it is clearly Israel's salvation that is in question, and that under their Messiah in the last days. Their Messiah will be enthroned in a two-fold character: as "King of righteousness," and "King of peace" (see Heb. 7: 2). It is then in His Person, as Messiah, having saved His people from their sins and their enemies, that righteousness and peace will kiss each other. In like manner, all other predictions of the Psalm will be fulfilled.

J.H.

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## THE ACCOMPANIMENTS OF THE CROSS

Might not the Lord have been spared the accompaniments of the Cross, the buffeting and the spitting, the scorn and the rabble, the vinegar and the thorny crown; would not the Cross itself have been enough? But we see, that in all these accompaniments, these aggravating additions, He is able to sympathize with His saints in some of those things which constitute their sharpest sorrows at times.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

Chapters 5: 6 — 7: 17.

**THE LORD JESUS** is mentioned 28 times in the book of Revelation as the Lamb, and verse 6 is the first occurrence. It is worthy of note that here and all through the book a diminutive form of the word is used—"little Lamb"—emphasizing thus the fact that He, who now appears wielding omnipotence, was once the Lamb of sacrifice, minimized and depreciated by men. He now has sevenfold power—symbolized by horns and the sevenfold discernment of the Spirit of God, who as the seven Spirits of God is now sent forth into all the earth. Therefore no corner is hid from His penetrating gaze and intelligence, and nothing will escape His powerful hand.

The Lamb, in lion-like power, came forward to take the book and thus assume His rights and execute the judgments of God in the earth: an action which provoked an outburst of praise and worship, that reverberated to the utmost bounds of creation.

This outburst begins in the inner circle of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, who were involved in the earlier ascription of glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, when creation was in question. Now redemption was in question, and consequently the Lamb is the Object of worship. All gladly honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. Indeed the Father refuses honour professedly offered to Himself, if the Son be not honoured.

The elders had harps, golden vials of incense and a new song: symbols taken from the Old Testament. The temple worship as ordained through David was based on Asaph with his harpers, the priests with their censers of incense, and then also there was "the song of the Lord," as mentioned in 2 Chronicles 29: 27. So the elders are seen functioning as priests both in song and in prayer. The Psalmist said, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense" (141: 2), and here are prayers which arise as incense and song which is based on redemption. The song is new, since it is based on a redemption out of every nation, instead of having a national character as in Exodus 15; and also inasmuch as it celebrates His worthiness to judge rather than to save.

The worship of the elders is characterized by three things. First, by intelligence and personal directness. They understand that the basis of all God's purposes is the redeeming blood of the Lamb, and they address Him personally, saying, "Thou art worthy." They do not merely sing about Him in the third person—"Worthy is the Lamb." Second, they sing, whereas the angels of verse 11 and the creatures of verse 13 are marked by "saying" and not by singing. Song, as we have remarked, belongs to those who have been redeemed.

Third, though redeemed themselves, they celebrate in an abstract way the Lamb's work of redemption by blood, being carried in spirit far beyond themselves. They are

occupied not so much with their part in it as with the supreme worth and excellence of the redemption in itself for the pleasure of "our God." This we say, because the better attested reading omits the "us" which occurs twice, and has, "they shall reign," rather than "we." The glorified, heavenly saints are lifted out of themselves to view things and worship from the Divine standpoint. This feature should surely be seen in the worship of the church to-day, though the reigning time is not yet come. In Revelation 5 we are on the threshold of the time when "the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan. 7: 18), and consequently it can be said, "they shall reign on [or over] the earth."

Now comes the voice of the innumerable angelic band, followed by the voices of all created things. In both these cases, as we have noted, they praise the Lamb without addressing Him personally. The ascription of praise is sevenfold on the part of the angels; fourfold on the part of every creature—four being the number indicating universality in creation. The angels declare that the Lamb, who was adjudged by men to be worthy of death, and who was led to the slaughter, is worthy of all glory in sevenfold completeness. Every creature sees the Lamb to be associated with Him who sits on the throne, and inheriting all blessing, honour, glory and power. To this the living creatures add their Amen. The elders are moved afresh to worship.

Before passing to chapter 6, we may again remind ourselves that John is recording for us a vision.

He was permitted thus to see and hear things heavenly and earthly, and so put on record in advance the ultimate outcome of the Lamb intervening in judgment. This particularly applies to verse 13. In subsequent chapters he records much evil and blasphemy, rather than praise, from creatures on earth; but ultimately all creation will have to declare His praise.

Chapter 6 gives us the opening of the seals. Judgment dealings with the earth begin. The words, "and see" in verses 1, 3, 5, 7, are doubtful, and the "Come," uttered by the four living creatures, seems to be a call to the respective riders to come forth. The living creatures speak with a voice like thunder, which befits a call, which has governmental justice and judgment as its object. One after the other there appear four riders, mounted on horses, white, red, black and pale or sallow. Each has his own special feature, but all under the controlling hand of God, symbolized by the living creatures.

First in order, there is the going forth of a great conqueror—bloodless conquest apparently, since white is the colour. Second, an outbreak of war, especially civil war with its lawless horrors. Third, black famine and scarcity. Fourth, pestilence ending in death and Hades, but over a limited area—the fourth part of the earth. It is certainly remarkable how in recent times colours have come to be identified with human movements and confederations. We have heard of armies both white and red, and of black-shirts, etc.

All the activities indicated in these verses are oppressive and destructive: human activities, and yet

called forth as retributive judgment under Divine control. They remind us of what the Lord Himself called, "the beginnings of sorrows" (Mark 13: 8). Then the next verse in Mark 13 speaks of the persecution of those who will be witnesses for God in those days; and similarly, the fifth seal follows here. It is opened by the Lamb as before, but no "Come" is uttered, for it only revealed to John the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God. The movements under the four seals, which meant oppression and misery for men generally, had meant persecution and death for these, and their souls cried out for vengeance. They had to wait, however. They had fallen under these beginnings of sorrows and other martyrs were to follow. Vengeance on their adversaries and the full vindication of themselves would not take place until the end of God's ways was reached. But meanwhile they were given a more secret token of approval, symbolized by the white robes.

The contrast between the cry of these martyred souls and the dying cry of Stephen is worthy of note. No request for vengeance came from his lips, but the very reverse—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But he lived at the beginning of the present dispensation of grace, and the church is still here as the exponent of the grace of God. These souls under the altar belong to the age of judgment, that follows the calling out of the church. Their cry coincides with that which we so often find in those Psalms, which men have called, "imprecatory." What would not be suitable on our lips is quite suitable on theirs, for

when God is going to take up His "strange work" of judgment it is in order to ask Him to do it speedily. He is going to make it a short work in the earth, only what is short to Him may seem long to the creature.

So verses 10 and 11, we judge, confirm the thought that we have left the church dispensation behind; and the opening of the sixth seal makes this yet more plain. Again there is no "Come," for agencies that are superhuman, and more directly from the hand of God, come into play. There are great convulsions both terrestrial and celestial, which result in the overturning of all that had seemed firmly established. What more firm than sun, moon and stars in the heaven and mountains and islands on earth, though stormy seas surround the latter? They symbolize established authorities and powers, whether in the heavens or on earth, and all are involved in a catastrophic fall or at least thrown into a state of flux. Recent happenings among the shaken nations of Europe have shown how disconcerting it is when those who have been like established luminaries are cast down. The allusion to the fig tree, which is so often symbolic of the Jew, may indicate that this upheaval will specially affect that people, thus preparing the way for the acceptance of antichrist.

How all these upheavals will affect men, from the greatest to the least, is shown in the close of the chapter. Apparently they will discern that the hand of God is behind them, and the wrath of the Lamb will strike them as dreadful beyond words. Better be crushed out of existence on earth than face that! Psalm 2 had said, "Kiss the Son,

lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little;" and at this point there was only a little wrath, for we are at the beginning of sorrows, yet perishing from the way was plainly before them. Though the climax of "the great day of His wrath" was not yet, they had entered upon that day, for the day of God's grace in the Gospel was closed. Men may stand in God's grace but no one can stand before His wrath.

The sixth seal had now been opened, and John does not see the opening of the seventh till chapter 8 is reached. Chapter 7 therefore presents us with a parenthetical interlude in which we have recorded Divine activities and their fruits before we see even more serious judgments falling on the earth. True to the order which runs consistently through the Scriptures, we have the Jew first and after that the Gentile.

There is a brief pause in the Divine dealings. The sixth seal had produced what is likened to a "mighty wind," but now the four winds of the earth are entirely restrained by angelic power. They were not to blow until the servants of God had been sealed in their foreheads—the most prominent part of their persons. These servants of God were found in the twelve tribes of Israel; but Levi coming into the reckoning and also both the tribes that represented Joseph, the number twelve is maintained by the omission of Dan. It has been thought that the way Jacob prophetically referred to Dan in Genesis 49: 16-18, may throw some light on this. If the "serpent by the way," and the "adder in the path," are an allusion to the antichrist, instigated by

Satan, rising out of the tribe of Dan, it may do so.

The numbers cited might of course be literal, but more probably are to be understood symbolically, especially as twelve and the square of twelve occur elsewhere in the book in a symbolic sense. The godly remnant of Israel are to have a place of administrative importance in the coming age, and twelve is the number of administrative completeness.

It is to be noted that at this point in the book angels again come into prominence. The Lord's parables in Matthew 13 have told us that they have a large part in the work of selective judgment at the end of the age. They "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend;" they "sever the wicked from among the just." What we see here is that they seal the just of Israel, so that they may be preserved and carried through. Until such are sealed the winds of judgment may not blow.

John **heard** the number that were sealed, and that recorded, he tells us the next vision that passed before his eyes. He **saw** a great multitude that came out of all nations, who appeared as standing before the throne and the Lamb. This was clearly a vision of a great host gathered from the Gentiles, as distinguished from the sealed remnant of Israel, that has just come before us. Another thing also differentiates the two companies. The elect of Israel are sealed, and thus marked for preservation, before the more direct judgments of God begin. The Gentile multitude is arrayed in the white robe of righteousness and holds the palms of victory as having come out of the great tribulation.

The one case, therefore, shows that God knows how to secure those already in relation with Him, **before the judgment begins**: the other shows how God can overrule tribulation, even of the fiercest sort, to reach people not previously in relation with Him, bringing them into relationship with Himself, and carrying them victoriously **through the tribulation**.

In the vision this Gentile multitude acclaimed God and the Lamb as the Source of their salvation. They did so with a loud voice that all might hear, and it met with an immediate response from the angelic throng. The multitude was before the throne, whereas the angels encircled the throne and also the elders and living creatures, who formed an inner circle. The angels are moved to worship. They add their Amen to the ascription of salvation to God and the Lamb, though they do not themselves experience salvation, and consequently they do not name it in their own ascription of seven-fold praise, as given in verse 12. Though they do not share the salvation, they can see the excellence and glory of God in it. They ascribe honour and power unto eternal ages to Him who has wrought it.

It is remarkable that one of the elders should have raised with John the two questions that would naturally rise in all our minds. Who are these people in their multitudes, and whence did they come? John's response, "Sir, thou knowest," was justified in the result. The elder did know, and gave the information. Consistently through the book the elders are characterized by the spirit of worship and by a very full understanding of God and His ways. As

representing the glorified saints, this is what we should expect of them, in keeping with the Apostle Paul's saying, "Now I know in part; but **then shall I know even as also I am known**" (1 Cor. 13: 12).

The elder's reply shows that this great company have a special place inasmuch as they have experienced special sorrows and tribulation. The whiteness of their robes was not produced by their own works, or even by their much suffering, but only by their having been washed in the blood of the Lamb; yet they have a recompense which is a suited answer to their sufferings, and for which their suffering had educated and qualified them.

Their place is "before the throne," a phrase which indicates, we believe, the place they have morally and spiritually: they are put into close touch with God. They have moreover a priestly place since they serve Him day and night in His temple. All the burden and oppression which they have suffered has ceased for ever, and on the contrary the Lamb Himself becomes the Minister of their joy and satisfaction, God having removed for ever anything and everything that causes a tear.

Thus it is a beautiful picture of millennial recompense and blessedness, which will be enjoyed by multitudes called out of the Gentile peoples and carried through the tribulation period. We have not yet reached the millennium in the orderly unfolding of the book, but in this parenthetical chapter we are permitted to have a glimpse of how God will preserve His people in view of it, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

There will of course be other multitudes, born during the progress of the age to come, also enjoying its blessedness. They will not belong to this company, however, nor share its special nearness, not having had the spiritual training involved in

passing through the special tribulation. For us the principle is stated in the words, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2: 12). The principle is the same for them, though the exact recompense may be different.

## "BRING THEM HITHER TO ME."

L. A. ANDERSON

(Matthew 14: 18).

**H**OW striking was the contrast between the disciples and their Lord. They were anxious to get the people to their homes so as to obtain food, and they bid Him send the hungry multitudes away. How significant is our Lord's reply. Their attitude was "Send the multitude away." His was, "Give . . . them to eat."

**They need not depart** (v. 16). They have one way, but He has another if they are willing. There is an alternative if they are but ready to act on it. These folk will have to go unless something is done, but "they **need not depart**."

How often do we, instead of lending a helping hand to those around us, ask Him to send them elsewhere—to somebody else perhaps, but not to us? The task seems too difficult, or too irksome, and we would rather do something different from His plan? When we find ourselves surrounded with those in distress temporally or spiritually, shall we try to remember those four words—"they need not depart"?

**Give ye them to eat** (v. 16). The Lord wanted those disciples to act and meet the need; and does He not

want you and me, though so unworthy in ourselves, to do His work in feeding others, and seeking to meet the needs of those around us? It may mean sacrifice; indeed it **will** mean sacrifice, for He says, "**give**."

But what are they able to do with five loaves and two fishes? How can they be of any use in an emergency such as this? The disciples are astounded at His words for they are quite powerless to do anything in the situation. Yes, that may be true so far as they are concerned, **but** "with God all things are possible." We may be utterly useless and powerless in ourselves; but suppose we bring our very helplessness to God, can He not, will He not use us for His glory and the blessing of others?

At this moment there lies a letter in front of me from a young man of but 19 years, away in the Pacific on a destroyer, who has not seen home for nearly two years, and this is an extract from his letter:—

"How I love that verse in 1 Cor. 1: 27, 'But God hath chosen the **foolish** things of the world to confound the **wise**: and God hath

chosen the **weak** things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.' Take the cross for instance — how weak and foolish a thing that is from a worldly point of view. I say this reverently, because judged by the earth's standard it is. After all, Jesus spent only three years on this earth proclaiming a kingdom of God and of heaven, of which He was to be the chief corner stone; and then He is crucified for His trouble, and the world laughs at the futility of it all—for three days—for Christ **ROSE AGAIN!**—and out of the weakness came strength.

“ Twelve disciples to proclaim a kingdom! Only twelve to pass on the wondrous story! But they were **His** disciples, and soon there were multitudes, thousands, millions to sound His name!

The world is beginning to have its second laugh now. Where is your Christ that is to come again—why does He delay? The mighty nations of the world are fighting for peace. **Thousands, millions,** dying for a peace that will last maybe twenty years—a turbulent peace, a time of perhaps unemployment and misery; and One shall come and gather His own to a **perfect and everlasting** peace.

God can wield millions of men to do a job, but one would do just as well. Our lives are so narrow and negative without God—our greatest deeds can only live as long as the world lasts. But He is so great that eternity is too short to proclaim all His wonders.”

Do we want to do something grand and great like Naman of old? Let us rather seek to do the small things with which He may entrust us first.

**Bring them hither to me** (v. 18). The loaves were very small and both loaves and fishes were just ordinary commonplace things; and yet He says, “ **Bring them** hither to Me.” You know the result of their obedience to Him—“ They did **all** eat and were filled,” and then there remained twelve baskets full. That vast number of perhaps 10,000 were satisfied in consequence of obedience to Him.

Shall we bring every little thing we have, however ordinary, however commonplace, to Him for His use and in His service? He will then do what we never could, and will make our very weakness strength. May we all be His willing servants as we hear Him say once again “ **Bring them hither to Me.**”

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## SANCTIFICATION

The law demanded holiness in desires and thoughts. To be sure it did. The rules of society demand rectitude in a thousand given cases. Conscience imperiously exacts moral conduct of us. But Christ not only does all this, but looks for a sanctification in His saints of a high and peculiar order—**separation from the world because HE is in heaven.**

# THE SERVANT OF GOD.

D. Ross

Notes of an address on 2 Corinthians 1: 8—12; 2: 14—17; 3: 4—6, 18; 4: 1—2, given at a conference of young Christian workers.

**T**HE second epistle to the Corinthians is Paul's *Apologia pro vita sua*,\* in which he defends his ministry against his detractors, and reveals to us the motives and the characteristic marks of a true servant of God.

The first of these is **confidence**. "We had the sentence of death within ourselves, that our confidence may not repose on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life" (Weymouth). His confidence was not self-confidence, which is one of the deadliest hindrances to any servant of God, nor was his confidence occasioned by his circumstances, for these caused him "fightings without and fears within." To the East in Galatia was the distressing threat of defection to a legalistic religion, which was a denial of the true gospel. Across the Aegean Sea to the West was the danger of the opposite fault, namely licentiousness among the Corinthians, which so perturbed him that he could not avail himself of the door of evangelism open to him in Troas. In Ephesus, home of Satanic power, the antagonism was so fierce that he described it as "fighting with wild beasts;" then to crown all were the humiliating experiences which hampered his service and were caused by his "thorn in the flesh." All these difficulties brought him to the verge of despair, but there he found the God of Resurrection. In the evil

days in which we live many may also be in danger of a defeatism which is treason to God and His cause. We may feel that the Assembly, which we seek to build up, is ready to perish, that our gospel efforts seem utterly futile, and that our Sunday School work appears fruitless. This, however, is the very time when the God who raises the dead can make His power manifest to those who trust Him and breathe into the dry bones the breath of His Spirit and make them to live.

But, despite the failure of the Corinthians, he also expresses his confidence in the saints and believes that he is there supported in prayer, just as doubtless many a missionary in the front line of battle against the powers of darkness is buoyed up and strengthened by the same hope in our days. May God grant us grace not to disappoint them. He also gives them credit for rejoicing in himself and has confidence in them that his joy and love is the joy of them all. Thus we see the true marks of a servant in Paul, who though he has to rebuke and perhaps rebuke severely, can nevertheless always find something to praise and encourage. Fathers are exhorted not to discourage their children, and preachers and Sunday School teachers would do well to mingle praise with their censure. Another confidence that marks him is confident speech. He says "we use great plainness of speech." How

\* The title of a book in which Newman—who afterwards became a cardinal—put his apology for his action, when he seceded to the Romish church.

markedly in contrast with the lack of positive preaching in the modern pulpit with its "ifs," and doubts, and lack of assurance in its message.

Another prominent word in this autobiography is **Conscience**, the neglect of which is fatal to the servant of God. Paul stresses this in many of his epistles. "Holding faith and a good conscience which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." Carelessness about our own personal conscience can make us a curse rather than a blessing to those whom we are seeking to help. He stresses no less the need of respecting our brethren's conscience, sometimes a difficult task, for their consciences may be ill informed and some of them can make themselves distressing obstructionists to those more zealous and more Christlike than themselves. Nevertheless it pays in the long run to seek to carry others with you in your exercises. But Paul also desires to commend himself to "every man's conscience" and the Christian, while not seeking popularity with the world, would do well to see that he offend no man's conscience, and thus to secure the qualification "well reported of them which are without lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." This is particularly important when one is dealing with children where carelessness of speech and character, inconsistency, and conduct which does not adorn the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, can easily become a "sin against the child," which will merit the wrath of the Friend of children, who said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about

his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

**Conqueror.** When Titus brought him the good news of a spiritual recovery of the Corinthians, he bursts out in "thanks to God which always causes us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." Doubtless he is thinking of a Roman triumph, the highest honour which could be conferred on a Roman general. The conqueror was permitted to march through the streets of Rome with all his troops, followed by the train of captives and the trophies of war, while incense smoked on every altar and its fragrance was the silent messenger of victory and joy. Paul himself was one of the captives "constrained by the love of Christ," and thus his message which told of Calvary's victory was both to him and to those who were saved by faith a savour of life unto life, but, alas! for those who rejected it, the same message became a savour of death unto death. This is to every gospel preacher a solemn thought and cause for deep exercise, lest the very same message, which melts the heart of one in contrition and confession, should be the means of the hardening of the impenitent.

**Competency.** The mighty issues at stake then cause him to exclaim, "Who is sufficient [or competent] for these things?" And later on he answers his own question, when he says, "We are not competent of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our competency is of God, who hath also made us competent ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the

spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." In our service we would do well to remember the words of wisdom spoken to a young cock-sure preacher, who thought himself competent, as he came down from the pulpit, crestfallen because of his failure: "Young man, if you had gone up the pulpit steps the way you came down, you would have come down the way you went up."

**God-consciousness.** One of the great secrets of Paul's competency was the God-consciousness in which he lived his life and carried on his service, as he says, "We speak of God;" that is, commissioned by Him; "in the sight of God;" i.e. in the consciousness of His presence and scrutiny; "speak we in Christ;" that is, in full communion with the Son of God. This God-consciousness, the highest expression of which is found in Psalm 139, is characteristic of those who were truly men of God, and the repeated expressions of Paul as he says, "In the sight of God;" "Before God;" "I call God for a witness upon my soul;" show us that Paul had this same characteristic. The poet Milton, as a serious-minded youth of twenty-three, speaks of living his life and doing his duty "as ever in my great Taskmaster's eye." Doubtless Paul, the apostle of Christ would have preferred to speak not of the Taskmaster, but of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," "Father of mercies and the God of all comfort," who had helped him in all the distresses of this time.

**No Corruption.** It is this God-consciousness also that preserves the preacher from one of his greatest snares, namely that of corrupting the Word of God or of handling it de-

ceitfully. This word "corrupt" does not only include the idea of teaching bad doctrine and adulterating the truth, but means the using of it for our own self-interest and petty gain. Weymouth's translation says, "We are not fraudulent hucksters of God's message." Some indeed there are who preach the word for filthy lucre's sake, but it is equally easy for a preacher to use his opportunity not for the glory of God and the blessing of souls, but for the showing off of himself, his fine voice, his eloquent preaching, his commanding figure or his learning. All such service is in vain.

**Contemplation.** The cure for this danger we find in Paul's words, "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Preachers may be occupied with the ethical or practical side of Christian truth or with the doctrinal aspect, but unless their souls are filled with the vision of the Christ, and that vision has had its transfiguring effect on them, there will be no result. This word beholding may also have the meaning of reflecting, and for reflection of light in a glass there must first of all be the reception of that light; and here the glory which Paul contemplates is not only the glory of the Christ of the Galilean road, but also and primarily that of the Lord now seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Contemplation of Him and His glory will have upon the preacher the same effect as God's glory had on Moses, when his face shone and he wist it not. Contemplation results in conformation to His likeness.

**Courage.** The result too of this contemplation is a courage which defies all the difficulties, discouragements and the spirit of defeatism—deadliest of sins. He says, "having this ministry;" that is, the ministry of the glory, "we faint not," or we do not play the coward; and even though the troubles and the persecutions, the trials and the sicknesses caused the outward man to perish, he still refused to grow faint-hearted for his eye was not on the seen but on the unseen, not on the temporal, but the things which are eternal.

Thus brethren, in your service, let your **confidence** be ever in the God of resurrection; keep a tender **conscience**; remember you are in a **conqueror's** train; never forget that **competency** for service comes alone from God; live in the **consciousness** of His presence; **contemplate** His glory; be **conformed** to His likeness; do **not corrupt** the word of God with any desire for selfish gain; and finally do not play the **coward**.

"Faint not, nor fear, His arms are near.  
He changes not and Thou art dear;  
Only believe and thou shalt see,  
That Christ is all in all to thee."

## A CALL TO BATTLE.

JAS. BIRSS

Notes of an address on Judges 5: 1—31, given on the same occasion as the foregoing address.

**O**NE of the last things I heard my father say was this: "We don't sing enough." We have had quite a bit of singing this afternoon, but it may be that in the places where you come from there is not so much singing as there is here. I think there is something in this: we need to sing a great deal more. We are sometimes reminded of the power of singing in the Congo. Sometimes I have heard the young men in a native village three or four hundred yards away begin singing in the evening, and when I rose at six in the morning they were still singing—singing to keep away the evil spirits. They find it a very good way to meet the enemy and send him packing. We have often said that Satan flees from the weakest saint upon his knees; I wonder how he feels when a company like this gets together desiring to rob him of his prey. Those lads sing because there

has been a death in the village, and heathen relatives have come with their mournful wailings, which they think will dispel evil spirits. It is to combat these useless wailings that they sing right through the night.

Here we have a Song of Victory and you notice from the beginning it is God Himself who has wrought this mighty victory. We have had our "Victory Parade" here in Edinburgh and have seen the members of the Forces go past each in his or her company. We all know the things they have done in this last war. We think of the men who went over the Mohne Dam, the men who went to Augsburg, the men who went to the heavy water plant in Norway, and many others like those, and we know they jeopardized their lives to the death. Their warfare is over; ours has not yet been finished. We know the enemy has been defeated. One has come, who,

by that which seemed defeat, has

“ . . . won the mead and crown,  
Trode all our foes beneath His feet  
By being trodden down.”

But the enemy still comes back. It was a hundred years since the Canaanites were defeated by Joshua, when he hurled them back into the mountains, and they had not come back at that time; but here they were, and we, too, can count on the enemy to come back. He will do all that is possible to hinder us from our progress, but God would have us go forward to the attack; and so from time to time there is a necessity for the Deborahs. Deborah means “The Bee,” and it has been said that she had a sting for her enemies: I think she had a sting for **her friends too**. We often need a friend like this to keep us up and going.

Perhaps you think that on the Mission Field we have no set-backs. I could tell you of one village where we went ten years ago and where we could be sure of a company of two hundred to hear the gospel every time. I was there about two years ago and I had to go from house to house to speak to individuals. Not one came to hear the gospel. So often I have to turn to this chapter for encouragement. It is just when the enemy comes like a flood that the Lord will raise a standard against him.

These people were at the very lowest ebb, depressed, dispirited, disarmed, and just at such a time God sent Deborah amongst them, and she says, “Up, we must be doing.” It doesn't take a whole company to do these deeds. How often in the Scriptures we find one man who gets wearied by defeatism and says, “God has given us some-

thing, and we let the enemy take it without a word,” and he will turn and with a God-given courage stand, like Shammah in the middle of his patch of lentiles, and defy the enemy and rout him. One man can turn the tide, one woman lead the singing. I wonder how our challenge will work this afternoon. Perhaps there is one who will find this a real challenge, will turn to face the enemy and go out sword in hand to attack his strongholds and save those held in bondage by him.

We find Deborah sent and called Barak and said to him, “Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men.” The top of Tabor, that is the place to go before the attack. In the valley there is plenty of room for the enemy to move with his nine hundred chariots of iron with their great knives and spikes, but up there is the source of our strength. That is where Barak went first with his ten thousand men; there too went the Lord Himself in His day. Many a time He left His disciples and the crowd and went up into a mountain to pray, and that is where we have to go first if we are to meet and defeat the enemy; to get into communion with God, to find out what His will is for us, and where He would have us go.

There is one thing which runs through this chapter just as it ran through our list of heroes during the war; there were those who offered themselves willingly. It takes consecration. We have to lay ourselves unreservedly on the altar, and the Scriptures say, “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save

it." There was one in Africa who jeopardized his life to the death. He taught himself to read so that he could know the Scriptures and go out with the gospel to his fellow-men. We heard he was ill, so we went out to see him. It seemed to us that he had been poisoned by the natives in the village, so we said, had he better not go back with us? "No!" he replied, "I will stay here if I have to die." He did die, and we went out to bury him. He had sung hymns all through the last night of his life and had asked to be buried with his head toward the meeting room. I don't doubt that those people did do away with him, when they saw his faithfulness and determination to carry on his work. Zebulon and Naphthali jeopardized their lives in the high places of the field. There are high places in Africa where there are no teachers to-day; places where the gospel was preached twenty to thirty years ago, where the people refused to listen and turned the missionaries back. These places are a challenge to us.

It would be easy to be like Reuben: he went into council about it, and thought about it for a day or so, and there **were** great searchings of heart, but he decided to stay by his sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks. There was Gilead, he sat at ease. There were Dan and Asher; they had their own private affairs, quite legitimate things, and we too have to ask ourselves this question: They are legitimate, but have they become hindrances to us?

Are they standing in the way of our serving the Lord? If so, we must do away with them. We hear nothing about Judah, and I sometimes wonder if there are one or two or many more who would add their names to that roll of dishonour.

Barak was not one of the great ones. He was of the tribe of Naphthali, which had suffered most at the hand of Jabin, but God chose and sent him and, in spite of his lack of faith at the beginning, he went. Later we find he charged down from the mountain top among his enemies and, with the very elements joining in the fray, drove them into the quagmires around the Kishon and so defeated Sisera and all his host.

Near the scene of this great victory was the little township of Meroz; the inhabitants of this place had a wonderful opportunity to help in the battle in its final stages, but the angel of the Lord had to say, "Curse ye, Meroz . . . curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Theirs is the sad tale of duty neglected and opportunity despised.

The Scripture ends, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." His enemies shall perish, whether we help or not. Surely we should be ambitious to have our names included on this roll of honour with Deborah and Barak, and those other men and women who through faith subdued kingdoms. May it be so for His Name's sake.

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We cannot be said to believe a thing any further than as it affects our action. The man who professes belief in anything, but whose acting is uninfluenced by what he professes to believe, does not really believe at all. "Faith without works is dead, being alone."

# “YE SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

(Leviticus II: 44)

A. J. POLLOCK

**L**EVITICUS teaches us some very practical lessons as to the necessity of the walk of the Christian answering to the truth he has learned from God. It points out very plainly the difference between what is clean and what is unclean. It calls for separation of the clean from the unclean. We learn this lesson typically in the instructions given to the children of Israel as to clean and unclean animals, those which were fit for food, and those, which had to be refused.

The clean animals were characterised as chewing the cud and parting the hoof. The animal had to be marked by **both** these characteristics in order to be accounted clean. What is to be learned by chewing the cud? The animal which does so, first enjoys a good meal of grass. Then it lies down and slowly chews a second time what it has already eaten. That sets forth the necessity on the part of Christians of reflection and meditation in relation to truth they have been brought into touch with by private reading of the Scriptures, or through the ministry of the word, or in other ways.

We once heard a servant of the Lord say, that he knew a method whereby a flock of hungry sheep could be taken through a field of clover and grass without getting a single bite; and that would be accomplished by dogs biting at their heels, and driving them at a furious rate through the field. This is like too many Christians, who read a little of the Bible, more or less as a duty, and therefore read quickly without meditation, and so get

nothing out of it. Scripture demands careful and devotional study to really profit by it. So we may learn a practical lesson as to chewing the cud.

As to parting the hoof, that teaches the lesson of separation, of choosing the good and refusing the evil; so it sets forth the practical answer to chewing the cud. That is, a Christian, who really meditates on the word, and answers to it in his practical ways and conduct, is alone pleasing to God. The word of God imposes upon the Christian a practical answer to the truth presented to him. So the Apostle Paul could say, “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life” (2 Tim. 3: 10). God will never divorce the manner of life from the doctrine.

There were some animals that chewed the cud and did not divide the hoof, such as the coney and hare. These set forth some Christians, who are earnest students of Scripture, and yet who are not careful that their life conforms to the teaching of Scripture. We have one in mind, who could give most excellent addresses, showing that the speaker gave diligent attention to the understanding of God’s word, and yet in his private life his conduct was a stumbling block to those, who knew it.

These animals—the coney and the hare—chewed the cud, but did not divide the hoof. We have an example to the contrary in the swine, which divided the hoof, but did not chew the cud. This seems to set forth a mere empty profession

without any true realization in the soul of divine things. Perhaps an extreme case of this may be found in a monk or a nun, who abjure the world and immure themselves between four walls, separating themselves externally from the world in a most complete fashion, yet sunk in depravity within. Their souls are dark, and they know nothing of the Spirit that giveth life in the reading of the Scriptures.

Something like this is found in the address to the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3: 14-22). Professing to be the church of God, boasting that they were rich, increased with goods, and had need of nothing, what was the judgment of the Lord, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, with eyes like a flame of fire? He denounced them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked. And the Lord Himself — OUTSIDE! How truly pathetic, and significant.

Here was loud profession with nothing of reality in it whatsoever. One cannot understand this of even a worldly Christian, but only of a real true descendant of the Pharisees, who were careful to "pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith" (Matt. 23: 23). Fatal omissions surely!

We come now to the fishes. The clean had to have fins and scales—**fins**, power to swim against the stream or current, **scales**, protection against the element in which it finds itself. What a word for young men and women especially. It reminds us of the advice that King Solomon gave to his unworthy son, "My

son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1: 10). In other words, learn to say NO, and stick to it. What sorrows many Christians would be spared, if they only used their spiritual fins, and swam against the stream of this world. It has been told that the great preacher, Spurgeon, was passing a marine store dealer's shop and saw the notice, "Bones wanted," when he murmured, "Yes, **backbones**"! Daniel, the captive lad of royal blood, who found himself amid pagan surroundings, and who surely needed fins and scales, is a good example: We read that "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan. 1: 8). The meat and drink had been offered doubtless to idols in heathen worship, and he did right in refusing to partake of it. Note, he purposed in his heart. That is where the spiritual "backbone" resides. It is all a question of affection for our Lord, as to how we steer our course.

Fins speak of active progress against the current of the world that rejects Christ. Scales of power to remain in adverse surroundings and find protection from that which is evil. Surely the greatest protection the Christian has is a real love for the Lord, begotten of the new nature that God gives to all His own. Just as a fish finds itself out of its sphere when out of the water, so the Christian should find himself out of his sphere in the world. Our Lord twice said of His own, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17: 14 and 16).

We come now to the birds. It will be readily seen that the unclean birds were predatory, that is living on carrion and putrefaction, such as the eagle, vulture, kite etc. People who live in tropical countries will appreciate this symbolism. We learn a lesson that what we eat, or appropriate mentally or spiritually, has an effect on our spiritual constitution. A predatory bird feeding on carrion becomes itself unfit for human consumption. Do we not get a direct New Testament challenge, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7: 1)? We read, too, how far it is removed from the divine mind to be characterized as those "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2: 3). Note the expressions "the flesh and **spirit**," and "flesh and **mind**." It is not sufficient to abstain from impure actions and deeds, but to be free of impure desires and thoughts. How the Spirit of God searches us through and through.

Then there were **night** birds, which were unclean. Night birds are predatory and live on vermin and the like, such as the owl, great and little, the night hawk, etc. These were forbidden as unclean. How vividly the Scriptures put the distinction between light and darkness.

"But, ye brethren, are . . . all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thess. 5: 4, 5). "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5: 11). "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3: 19). How plain is the warning given to us!

Then we have flying, creeping things such as go on all fours, creatures of the earth earthy, and that cannot rise. Such were unclean, but there was a provision that creeping things that had legs above their feet enabling them to leap from the earth might be eaten as clean, such as the grasshopper, the bald locust and the beetle after his kind. Note, these creeping things that might be eaten had the power to lift themselves from the earth. Is this not what marks the Christian, that he is capable of rising, or can leap, as it were, from the earth?—rise to something beyond this poor sinful world.

Then the chapter proceeds to give many careful instructions how to deal in cases of defilement, and thus preserve the holiness that becomes God's people. May we all learn salutary lessons from this interesting chapter.

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Worship must be "in spirit and in truth." Now to worship "in spirit" is to worship according to the true nature of God, and in the power of that communion which the Spirit of God gives. Spiritual worship is thus in contrast with the forms and ceremonies, and all the religiousness of which the flesh is capable. To worship God "in truth" is to worship Him according to the revelation which He has given of Himself.

## THE PRAISE OF MEN.

A letter by the late J. N. Darby, which is calculated to search the heart of every servant of Christ. May it do so with every reader.

**M**Y dear Friend and Brother in Jesus Christ:—

It gives me much pleasure to see your translation of ——. I reserve the pleasure of reading it, or rather of having it read to me, for moments in which the Lord says to us, as He did to the Apostles, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." But I cannot refrain from telling you, my dear friend, that the pleasure that the appearance of your work gave me has been somewhat abated by the too favourable opinion which you have expressed in your preface respecting me. Before I had read a word in your translation, I made a present of a copy to a very dear and sincere friend of mine, who brought me word that you had spoken in praise of my piety in your preface. The passage produced the same effect on my friend that it did on me, when I afterwards saw it. I hope, therefore, that you will not take in ill-part what I am about to say to you on the subject, and which is the fruit of a tolerably long experience.

Pride is the greatest of all evils that beset us, and of all our enemies it is that which dies the slowest and hardest: even the children of the world are able to discern this. Madame De Stael said, on her death-bed, "Do you know what is the last to die in man? It is self-love." God hates pride above all things, because it gives to man the place that belongs to Him who is above, exalted over all. Pride intercepts communion with God, and draws down His chastisement, for "God resists the proud." He will

destroy the name of the proud, and we are told that there is a day appointed when "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low." I am sure, then, you will feel, my dear friend, that one cannot do another a greater injury than by praising him and feeding his pride. "He that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a snare for his feet," and "A flattering mouth worketh ruin." Be assured, moreover, that we are too short-sighted to be able to judge of the degree of our brother's piety; we are not able to judge it aright without the balance of the sanctuary, and that is in the hand of Him who searches the heart. Judge nothing, therefore, before the time, until the Lord come, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, and render to every man his praise. Till then let us not judge of our brethren, whether for good or evil, but with becoming moderation, and remember that the surest and best judgment is what we form of ourselves when we esteem others better than ourselves.

If I were to ask you how you know that I am one of the most advanced in the Christian career, and an eminent servant of God, you would no doubt be at a loss to reply. You would perhaps cite my published works; but do you know, my dear friend and brother—you who can preach an edifying sermon as well as I can—that the eyes see further than the feet go? and that unhappily, we are not always, nor in all things, what our sermons are; that "We have this treasure in

earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us"? I will not tell you the opinion I have of myself, for in doing so, I shall probably all the while be seeking my own glory; and while seeking my own glory, appear humble, which I am not. I had rather tell you what our Master thinks of me—He that searcheth the heart—and speaks the truth, who is "The Amen, the Faithful Witness," and has often spoken in my inmost soul, and I thank Him for it; but, believe me, He has never told me I am an "Eminent Christian and advanced in the ways of godliness." On the contrary, He tells me very plainly that if I knew my own place, I should find it that of the chief of sinners, and least of all saints. His judgment, surely my dear friend, I should take rather than yours.

The most eminent Christian is one of those of whom no one has ever heard speak, some poor labourer, or servant, whose all is Christ, and who does all for His eye, and His alone. The first shall be last. Let us be persuaded, my dear friend, to praise the Lord alone. He only is worthy of being praised, revered, and adored. His goodness is never sufficiently celebrated. The song of the blessed—Rev. 5—praises none but Him who redeemed them with His blood. It contains not one word of praise for any of their own number—not a word that classes them into eminent, or not eminent—

all distinctions are lost in the common title, **the redeemed**, which is the happiness and glory of the whole body. Let us strive to bring our hearts into unison with that song in which we all hope that our feeble voices will one day mingle. This will be our happiness, even here below, and contribute to God's glory, which is wronged by the praise that Christians too often bestow on each other. We cannot have two mouths—one for God's praise, and one for man's. May we, then, do now what the seraphim do above, who with two wings cover their faces, as a token of their confusion before the holy presence of the Lord; with two cover their feet, as if to hide their steps from themselves; and with the remaining two fly to execute their Lord's will, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

Excuse these few lines of Christian exhortation, which I am sure will, sooner or later, become useful to you, by becoming part of your own experience. Remember me in your prayers, as I pray that the blessing of the Lord may rest upon you and your labours. If ever you print another edition—as I hope you will—strike out, if you please, the two passages to which I have drawn your attention; and call me simply "A brother, and minister in the Lord." This is honour enough, and needs no addition.

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The essential thing in service is to have the mind of the Lord concerning that on which we are engaged. It is impossible therefore to lay down absolute rules which will meet every case; but if I am in communion with Him who deigns to send me, the path will be very plain, however difficult it may be to walk in it. To be, however, in communion, I must be both **obedient** and **dependent**.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 8: 1 — 9: 21).

**T**HE opening of the sixth seal (6: 12-17), produced great convulsions, affecting both the heavens and the earth, which brought terror into the hearts of all. Then came a pause; the winds of heaven being arrested until the servants of God were sealed. Chapter 8 brings us to the opening of the seventh seal and again there is a pause, described as "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." What transpires on earth during that time is not stated. Divine judgment, when it falls, is not only sure but **swift**, yet it is never **hurried**. During this interval of silence the seven angels "prepared themselves to sound" their trumpets. There is a calm serenity about the Divine action in judgment, and it is postponed to the last possible moment.

Angels now come into prominence. This is in keeping with the Lord's own words in Matthew 13: 39, 41, 49; and again in 24: 31. Angels of special importance are indicated here—"the seven angels which stood before God." To Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the angel announced himself as "Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God" (Luke 1: 19). These seven angels had that peculiar privilege also. In the trumpets that were given to them we have a symbol that differs from the seals. The breaking of the seals not only set in motion the providential judgments that came on men, but also revealed their secret source. Such things, in a less intense form, had come to pass before. The hand of God in the judgments might not

have been discerned, had not the seals been broken. The trumpet, on the other hand, is the symbol of what is clearly avowed, constituting an unmistakable call to all. The trumpet was commonly used in Israel, whether for calling an assembly or sounding an alarm. In our chapter the alarm is sounded with great emphasis.

But again, there took place during the half hour the action of "another angel," detailed in verses 3-5. This great Angel acted in high priestly capacity, adding the fragrance of His incense to the prayers of all saints. Many therefore see in Him a symbolic representation of Christ Himself, and we think they are right. His action was twofold. First, He acted on behalf of living saints, so that their prayers might ascend before God as "an odour of a sweet smell." There were still saints on earth, though many had been martyred as chapter 6: 9 showed. Those uttered their cry for vengeance but they did not need the action of the High Priest as these did.

In the second place, His action indicated the fire of judgment. The same censer, that was used for incense and fragrance, was now filled with fire from the altar, and flung to the earth as a signal for the trumpet judgments to begin. The censer was **golden** in keeping with the golden altar, symbolic of that which is divine in its intrinsic excellence. So whether it was the prayers of saints ascending in fragrance, or fire descending in judgment, all was executed in a

righteousness which is divine.

In verses 7-13 we get the sounding of the first four trumpets and the results. The language continues to be highly symbolic, and a feature common to each is that the judgments only fall upon a third part of the things affected. This shows that for the moment the effects are not universal but limited. The phrase, "the third part," occurs again in chapter 12: 4, where the Roman Empire, energized by Satan, is in question. This leads to the conclusion that here it is used to indicate the Roman earth, which is practically to be identified with the western European powers, or perhaps we may say, **Christendom**.

Another thing we notice in these verses is that the judgments fall on things rather than men. Yet the things specified—earth, trees, grass, sea and creatures in it, ships, rivers, fountains, sun, moon, stars—are not themselves moral agents, and so accountable to God. Man is the rebel sinner who has to be dealt with. The things are symbols of man and of what is connected with him.

For instance, "earth" signifies the stable organized nations, in contrast with "sea"—the restless, disorganized peoples. "Trees" signify the great men of the earth, in contrast with "green grass," which indicates the common people, but in a prosperous state. "Ships" would be the symbol of commerce. "Rivers" and "Fountains" of the channels and sources of life and refreshment. The darkening of part of both day and night would indicate the disturbance of the whole course of nature to the blinding of men.

The judgment inflicted is symbolic

in each case. "Hail and fire," mingled with blood," must signify judgment from heaven of a crushing and searching nature, bringing death in its train. "A great mountain burning with fire . . . cast into the sea"—some imposing and apparently stable institution crashing under divine judgment into the restless masses of humanity. A "great star" burning as a lamp and falling from heaven, speaks rather of some prominent individual, who had shone as a luminary, utterly apostasizing, and spreading death-dealing poison of a spiritual sort. The smiting of the third part of sun, moon and stars indicates the partial putting out of the sources of light and direction for men.

It is of course quite possible that we may have here reference also to great sights and signs and catastrophes in the realm of nature. But such things are not, we judge, the main objects of the prophecy, which has to do with what is spiritual and moral rather than what is physical and material.

After the fourth trumpet a very grave warning was sounded. "Eagle" rather than "angel" is the better attested reading in verse 13, which is significant in view of the Lord's words in Matthew 24: 28. The state of "the inhabitants of the earth" is becoming like that of a putrid carcase, and hence the three following trumpets are to unleash judgments of threefold intensity. This phrase or the equivalent, "them that dwell on the earth," occurs a number of times in the book, and usually indicates a special class, whose interests and hopes are completely centred on the earth, and who have excluded all that is of heaven from their thoughts. As

Christians we have a heavenly calling, and yet the present trend of religious thought is to concentrate exclusively on the earth, and to treat our hope of heaven with derision. When the church is gone, the earth-dwellers will be striving for their earthly paradise and expecting it as a result of their efforts. These apostates will specially come under the governmental wrath of God.

The fifth and sixth trumpets follow in chapter 9; both of them are termed a "woe," so severe is the judgment they inflict. In general there is a resemblance between them, but the fifth brings torment so fierce that men will desire death and yet death will elude them. The sixth does bring death. In reading this chapter we need hardly remind ourselves that the descriptions are couched in symbolic language. If taken literally we should have to picture something very grotesque.

Under the fifth trumpet infernal influences are let loose upon the earth. The star that falls from heaven to earth indicates some person of eminence that apostasizes, and to him the key of the abyss was given. The personal pronoun, "him," certainly infers that a person is meant. In the light of what follows later in the book, this may well be the Antichrist himself. The immense cloud of smoke that arises from the opened pit, darkening the air, graphically figures the sending forth of dark and even demonic influences, which shut out from men the light of heaven. In our times we have witnessed something like a preliminary essay of Satan in this direction. About the middle of the nineteenth century a puff of smoke from the pit arose and shaped itself

into the mystic word, "evolution." Think of the darkening influence that puff of smoke has thrown over the minds of millions! The light of God has been obscured in their minds by an imaginary ape-man, or even a mere speck of protoplasm. It is the god of this age who blinds the minds of them that believe not.

Out of this darkening influence comes the swarm of "locusts." Here is another graphic figure. The locust is an insignificant insect in itself, but terrifying when it arrives in countless hordes. These had the poison of scorpions, and unlike the natural locust that preys upon every green thing, these were only to afflict the unsealed of men. This refers us back to the opening verses of chapter 7, where we find that those sealed were the servants of God out of the tribes of Israel. We presume, therefore, that those of Israel who were not sealed are particularly in question here. If this inference is correct it would strengthen the thought that the fallen star is the Antichrist, for the darkening influence of his apostasy would specially affect the mass of Israel who are still in unbelief. The effect produced is described as the torment of a scorpion's sting, which is very acute but does not usually kill. There is a limit to the period of this infliction—5 months; that is, while the torment is so acute that men would prefer death, it is not prolonged.

The details given in verses 7-10 have a meaning which is not really obscure. Battle horses surely signify aggressive might. The crowns they wear are not the diadems of royalty but the wreaths of victory, which they have assumed. To the eye they looked like gold, but they were not

really what they appeared to be, but only, "as it were." The face of a man speaks of intelligence: the hair of women of subjection: the teeth of lions of ferocious power. Breast plates of iron would indicate complete imperviousness to attack. Their sting being in their tails is reminiscent of Isaiah 9: 15, where we read, "The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." Another reference this, which directs our minds to the Antichrist.

Finally, these symbolic locusts were under the direction of a king, whose name means "The Destroyer." He is described as "the angel of the bottomless pit." This indicates that these locusts are an organized force, and under the direction of a controlling destructive power, just as in nature the locust swarms of countless millions act like a well-directed army. Though under the direction of the destroyer, this woe falls upon man not unto death—for death flees from them—but into the destruction of all that makes life on earth worth living. Darkness and torment of a spiritual sort is what is indicated.

At the sounding of the sixth trumpet the golden altar is again mentioned. Not now the priestly offering of incense with the prayers of saints, but forth from it a voice of Divine authority, commanding the loosing of the four angels that had been bound in the Euphrates, who were prepared to bring death upon men—not torment now but death. Four speaks of universality, and the Euphrates was the great river that divided the lands of the east from the land of Israel. In chapter 16: 12, we find this great river mentioned again in connection with the sixth vial. It may well be

that what happens here has a bearing upon the happening indicated then. This woe is strictly limited, not merely to the day but even to the hour of its execution.

The loosing of the four angels of death precipitates upon men the immense army of 200,000,000 horsemen, who were their instruments in this dreadful task. Verses 17-19, give us details of these horses and their riders, which are again symbolic and figurative. The "third part of men" appears again here, so we gather this woe from the east falls specially on what we have called the Roman earth. It is indeed a woe, for even the breastplates—normally a piece of armour wholly defensive are of fire and jacinth and brimstone, and therefore bear an offensive character. This time too the "power" is in the mouth as well as in the tail; but the tails were like serpents with heads dealing out "hurt," while the mouths cast forth fire and smoke and brimstone. All this is indicative surely of something that is very satanic on the one hand, and what is suffocating and death-dealing and full of judgment and pain on the other. If the earlier woe was more applicable to the unsealed apostates of Israel, this falls rather on the Gentile nations and the proud Roman Empire, which in its revived form will be the dominant political power in the earth in the last days.

The "death" spoken of here we understand to signify utter and irremediable apostasy which sinks a man into final alienation from God. Those smitten with this death would be past all feeling or judgment as to what is right and what is wrong. We have recently had some striking examples of this kind of thing in

those who fell under the Nazi delusion and became the instruments of its appalling cruelties. It may well be, of course, that literal death of the body follows in many cases, but it is not, we believe, the primary thought.

Verse 20 speaks of "the rest of the men" who were not smitten by death. They did feel the weight of the plagues but they did not repent. Here for the first time in Revelation we get this word, "plague." It at once turns our minds to the plagues in Egypt, recorded in the early chapters of Exodus; and this, we think, not without reason. God's judgments run a course which is consistent with Himself. Judgment is His "strange work;" He does not delight in it, and therefore He does not strike the final overwhelming blow without giving ample warning by preliminary blows of a lesser sort. He may well know that these lesser judgments will not produce repentance and so avert the final intervention, nevertheless He justifies His ways in judgment in the sight of all heavenly intelligences, and permits them to see how right He is when at last He strikes overwhelmingly. So in the case before us: men did not repent. We are permitted to see the depths to which men will have sunk in those days; worshipping demons on the one hand, and the insensible works of their own hands on the other.

Is it possible that men, who live in lands where the light of the Gospel once has shone, can sink to such a level? It certainly is. Millions of men and women were recently worshipping Hitler, who apparently was in touch with a

demon by means of clairaudience—hearing voices from the unseen world. He would have been next to nothing without his "familiar spirit," and in worshipping him men were really worshipping the demon that inspired him. The worship too of the material grows apace, as more and more men are obsessed with their great discoveries, and the works of their own hands by which these discoveries are made available, whether for good or for ill. In worshipping these works of their hands, man really is worshipping himself. In those days then, men will worship themselves and demons. They are not very far away from it today.

The last verse of our chapter shows that along with this will go complete moral breakdown. Sorceries or witchcraft indicate traffic with demonic powers, in all its various forms; the other three things specified we are all acquainted with. When life is held cheaply, when personal purity is quite disregarded, when the rights of property are ignored, a state of things must be produced reminiscent of the state of the earth before the flood, or the degradation that prevailed in Sodom and Gomorrah at a later date.

Such is to be the state of things on earth when these "woe" judgments are unleashed. But we have heard the Lord's own words, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man . . . Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot . . . Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17: 26-30). So we are not surprised.

# GOD'S UNCHANGING PURPOSE.

R. HARKNESS

Notes of an address on Nehemiah 9: 1—8; Isaiah 41: 8; 42: 6; 43: 10; Acts 1: 8, given at a Conference of young Christian workers.

**F**ROM a human standpoint no stranger place could be imagined for the Apostle Paul than that in which we find him on his first visit to Philippi. Here was the great Christian teacher, a man of powerful intellect and spiritual energy, the seer of visions and yet the man of action, whose presence seemed to be needed more urgently in a score of centres where there were Christian communities, sitting in an insignificant women's prayer meeting by the riverside in a heathen city. This was his first meeting in Europe and, incidentally, the first step in the onward march of the Gospel towards Britain. Was his presence there a waste of time and talent, or in the will of God?

Sixty years or more ago a missionary named Gordon was working in his house, which barely kept off the blazing rays of the sun, on the island of Erromanga, deep in the wide wastes of the Pacific. The soil of Erromanga had been stained by the blood of martyrs. John Williams and also Gordon's elder brother, with his wife, had all three been slain there. He had come to carry on their work. He was translating the Scriptures, and was busy on Acts, chapter 7. He had reached the words uttered by Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Suddenly a native rushed in and, with his tomahawk, cleft the skull of the young missionary asunder and his brains spattered the page. Was that foolish devotion to a forlorn cause, or in the will of God?

The first white man to reach the Katanga province of the Congo was a missionary, Dan Crawford. Thank God that, when so often the first white man to come in contact with heathen people has been the man of commerce, this time it was the man of God. After many months of labour alone, recruits had come to join him. One, as he met Crawford and shook him by the hand, said, "I have come to pay my debt." Just a year later that young recruit was laid in his grave, a victim of malaria. He died in Crawford's arms, praying for the land for whose people he gave his life. Was that a dreamer's delusion or in the will of God?

Before we try to solve these enigmas let us turn to the Scriptures and see if there we can learn something of what God's purpose and will are for the heathen.

We read from Nehemiah, a book which describes a period full of possibilities in the history of Israel. The movement which began in 536 B.C. with the decree of Cyrus King of Persia was carried on in two waves of effort:—

1. That stimulated by Haggai and Zechariah, with its object the rebuilding of the Temple (see Ezra 6: 14) and the restoration of the worship of God, completed in 515 B.C.
2. That whose inspiration was Nehemiah, with the object of rebuilding the Wall, symbol of a re-created spirit of community.

At the time of our chapter

(Nehemiah 9) this latter wave had reached its climax. The census had been made, the law read, the ordinances and feasts restored. We read of a solemn assembly and a prayer of dedication. It is the prayer of dedication we wish to consider.

The prayer is noteworthy because of its reference back to Abram—the pilgrim. The emphasis is not on their national history with its kings and prophets, but on their origin by the calling of Abram out of Ur to be a pilgrim, and on the time when Israel was the “ekklesia” in the wilderness (Acts 7: 38). A nation, worldly and of the world, had gone into exile. This remnant, which had broken free from the entanglements which made it so easy for most of the Jews to settle down in Babylon, and had come back to a devastated land and city, had been educated by their exile. Sometimes it does take adversity to educate us spiritually, and it is not, perhaps, strange that times of temporal adversity are oftentimes of spiritual prosperity. The reading of the Law (Moses—the Pentateuch) to these Jews of Nehemiah’s day reminded them of God’s call to Abram. The restored Feast of Tabernacles reminded them, as it was intended to do, that their forefathers had dwelt in booths, pilgrims in the wilderness. Their experiences had made them more able to understand, first, God’s original purpose for their nation, that they were to be a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (see Exodus 19: 5; Deut. 7: 6); and second, their missionary calling among the heathen, preached by Isaiah in the verses we read, and emphasized by Zechariah. We know that the Scriptures referred to in Isaiah had their complete

fulfilment only in Christ, the perfect servant of Jehovah, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the prophet’s message was to the people of Israel. “Thou, Israel, art my servant . . . I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness . . . and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles . . . Ye are my witnesses,” saith the Lord.

The chastening of the nation by exile had been necessary because Israel, from being the Lord’s servant, had become in its own opinion the Lord’s favourite. It forgot that privilege carries with it responsibility, that it was elected not only to a special place, but to service.

The story of Jonah is an illustration of what happened to Israel, if we can accept the imagery of Jeremiah 51: 34 and 44, as applying, where Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are likened to a dragon or sea monster, as the same Hebrew word is translated in Lam. 4: 3. This monster swallowed up Israel, but Jehovah would cause him to bring forth out of his mouth that which he swallowed up, a prophecy fulfilled in the return from exile. Jonah’s experience was an illustration of this: He shirked God’s commission and his back-sliding brought him to the sorry pass of being swallowed by a great fish. It must have been a terrible experience, and he came out of it very much chastened and ready to carry out his mission as God’s messenger to the great heathen city of Nineveh. The book of Jonah, which has been called the one completely missionary book of the Old Testament, ends on this note: “Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than

six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?" Here we catch the sound of the heart-beats of the Divine love, that same love which the New Testament declares will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea."

There is no limit to the love of God. Yet the descendants of this returned remnant, like their forefathers before them, lost their vision. They did preserve the knowledge of the one true God, but they did not publish it to the nations. Rather were they characterized by racial bigotry and exclusiveness. They failed as God's witnesses, but His unchanging purpose of blessing for the nations wavered not.

When the fulness of the time was come He sent forth His Son, the Faithful and True Witness. God had been preparing for the coming of this One, who was the fulfilment of all prophecy. In the world into which He came, there was firstly the Jew, purged from idolatry by the experience of the exile and preserving the knowledge of the one God in a pagan world. Then there was the Greek, with his intellectual genius and wonderful language, which was to become a mighty instrument for the spread of the Gospel. There was also the Roman, with his political genius, his "Pax Romana," and his highways for commerce, soon to become the highways for the Lord.

And when Christ came, how do we find God's purpose revealed in Him? His vision was never limited to the narrow confines of Israel. Early in His ministry He declared, "God so loved the world . . ." It

was He who told His disciples, "The field is the world . . ." He spoke of the Church He was going to build, and when He sent forth those who were to be His instruments for the task, He said, "Go ye into all the world . . ." and "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Paul taught that the Covenant with Abraham, with its promise of blessing for the nations, was not only renewed but fulfilled in the true seed of Abraham, those who have faith in Christ, who become heirs not only to Abraham's blessings but to his pilgrimage and commission.

How did the apostles and early Christians realize and respond to the Divine purpose? We may answer this by considering what is the outstanding impression of the first century of the Christian witness. Surely it is of an amazing and rapid expansion. Despite the bigoted enmity of the Jews, despite the supercilious scorn of the Romans, which developed into bitter hostility, backed by apparently unconquerable power, the despised Christians outlived, outthought and outdied the pagans, until the great Roman Empire yielded outward homage in the person of its Emperor Constantine, who became a professed convert to the Christian faith. His first act on ascending the throne was to receive a deputation from a heathen tribe on the shores of the Black Sea, asking for Christian teachers. The witness of a captured slave maiden had awakened in them a desire for the Gospel. It was by signs such as this that Constantine read the victory of the despised Jesus of Nazareth over all the pantheon of the heathen gods.

Many centuries have come and gone. If the "first, fine, careless rapture," and fearless witness of those days had continued, there would not be half the world's population still without the knowledge of Christ.

Yet so it is. And how are we, believers of this day and generation, responding to the Divine purpose? We can return now to the questions with which we began. In the light of the subsequent history of Europe, in the light of the wonderful response to the Gospel of the Pacific Islanders (whose Christians were called "Fuzzy-wuzzy angels" by the tough Australian soldiers of this war), in the light of the many converts in the Congo to-day, I think we can answer them with an unhesitating affirmative and say, "Yes, a thousand times, yes, it was all in the will of God."

The will of God, that unchanging purpose, remains. What are we doing about it? Do we boast of our greater knowledge, and feel we are in a special position compared with others? Let us beware of Israel's sin of pride which wrought her downfall. Let us not think we are God's favourites, forgetting that we are His servants, and unprofitable ones at that. Let us remember that privilege brings responsibility. Let us recall that we are stewards of the mysteries of God; that precious truth has been committed to us to pass on, and that it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

We have been hearing, in connection with the work of the Lord abroad, the vital importance of the support of God's people in the

homelands. We are not here to-day to speak for one particular field. We know missionaries labouring in Portugal, Brazil and Africa. I wonder if you know their problems; I wonder if you even know their names?

Would to God that we could hear many in this company asking, "What can **we** do to further God's unchanging purpose, revealed in His word, that the heathen, yea, all men everywhere, should have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel and believing in the Saviour?"

I am not making an appeal for volunteers for the mission field. When I made known my desire to go to the foreign field, someone said to me, "You are choosing life-long self-denial." It is not my place to urge that upon anyone. It is the Lord of the harvest who calls and thrusts forth labourers into the harvest field. But if we cannot go, what share can we have in this enterprise of God? Certain it is, that if this meeting does not result in action, it has failed of its purpose. We attend meetings, we hear so much, but what **do** we more than others? I would ask each one here not just to give heed, not to go away with good intentions, never perhaps to be translated into action, but to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

"Knowledge we have, knowledge Thou hast lent,

The will, Lord, this is our bitter need.

Help us to build upon the deep intent,  
The deed, the deed."

What was the impelling force that drove the early Christians or the missionaries I mentioned and myriads more, out upon the highways of the world to suffer and die?

They did not first work out some coldly logical theory of the heathen and their need. They had seen the vision of the Christ, crucified, risen, exalted. They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. They went forth in His Name to carry the tidings of His love to the far corners of the earth. It is that vision alone that will send us forth and keep us going on faithfully in the steps of the Master. It is that vision alone

that, if we cannot go ourselves to the foreign field, will impel us to consecrated prayer and effort and giving, to support those who do give their lives to the task.

May God grant us each one a fresh vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all His risen glory and power, and that in obedience to the heavenly vision we may go from this place to be His pilgrims and witnesses in the world which so much needs Him.

## CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE HOME.

R. McCALLUM

Notes of an address on Genesis 25: 28; 27: 2—8; 1 Sam. 2: 23, 24; 3: 13, 18; Job. 1: 1, 2, 4, 5; 2 Tim. 3: 14—17, given on the same occasion as the foregoing address.

**WE** have been privileged to hear about the work of the Lord in Central Africa, and doubtless we have been impressed by the fact that we have a responsibility in connection with that work. It may be, however, that to most of us that field seems remote. We admire the self-sacrifice, zeal and courage of those who have left comforts and good prospects to serve the Lord so far away; we desire to uphold them by prayer and by gift, but we are by the very nature of things excluded from a more active participation in that sphere of service.

I now want to emphasize some characteristics of life in the home and our obligations as parents or as children if we would honour the Lord. There is no more beautiful love story in the whole realm of literature than that found in Genesis 24. Abraham's most fervent desire for a suitable bride for Isaac, the son of promise, had been wonderfully

realized, divine guidance having been manifestly in operation, and "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Here is an idyllic wedding, inaugurated with the evidences of Divine blessing and purest human love!

How comes it then that, in turning over the pages of one or two chapters, we come upon the story of shocking deception: of intrigue, chicanery and lying: of the most contemptible advantage taken of blindness—practised by a son who valued spiritual realities and at the instigation of his mother who had at least apprehended the Divine purpose that the elder should serve the younger? A suggestion of the cause appears to be given in chapter 25: 28, when we read, "And Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob."

Here we find the husband and wife formerly united as one, now divided as father and mother over the family, and exhibiting an unworthy partiality towards the children. Isaac in old age presents an unlovely picture—a blind but sensuous old epicure so engrossed with the food that his soul loved that, to gratify his palate, he is willing to ignore and flout the Divine intention; while Rebekah is so obsessed by the desire to see her favourite Jacob receive the blessing that she abandons the most elementary observance of truth and righteousness in her passion to gain her end. It is true, of course, that Esau was a profane person who had already despised his birthright, but the fulfilment of Divine purpose does not depend for accomplishment upon the intrigues and machinations of men, and it is interesting to follow the poetic retribution meted out to Rebekah and Jacob for their despicable intrigue. How lamentable to see a young man with the many excellent natural qualities possessed by Esau, but living out of sympathy with all that was best in his father's house, repudiating the reality of spiritual things, and despising the blessing of Almighty God.

To the young present, the children of godly parents, I would say, "See that you do not despise your spiritual heritage;" and to parents, "Seek to be free from partiality towards your children, and by God's grace to be an example to them in all godliness, both by lip and by life."

The verses read from 1 Samuel present another tragedy in a godly home. Aged Eli had judged all Israel for many years and had ministered in all fidelity at God's

altar, yet his sons were sons of Belial, bringing the temple of God into contempt by their vile practices. We may well ask how it came about that Eli, of all men, should have two such sons?—sons whose earliest impressions must have been of praise issuing from the house of God, and whose earliest remembrances must have been of their father ministering at the altar. It has been suggested with considerable justice, I doubt not, that Eli as judge and priest was attempting too much, and as a result neglecting the nurture and admonition of his family. Other fathers took their sons by the hand and led them to the temple, which to them was a place of wonder and worship. Other fathers told their sons of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Joseph, and of Moses, but Hophni and Phinehas were without wonderment and respect for the temple of God or the history of God's people. Some day, Eli doubtless promised himself, he would be able to take his sons in hand and fulfil a father's part. But that day never came.

Everything seemed to be against poor Eli. His sons were prematurely old in the knowledge of evil, gross evil, of which the father was evidently aware, but in the practice of which "he restrained them not." We have passed through an era in which great emphasis has been laid upon the desirability of allowing complete self-expression on the part of the young, and in which the evil of repression has been stressed, but be it noted how God condemns the sin of indulgence on the part of the parents towards the sins of their offspring. It is when the child is young that correction is possible. Eli, like many another, locked the stable

doors after the horses had bolted. How terrible the judgment to fall upon Eli and his house, aggravated, one would judge, by the fact that he heard the capital sentence from one whom he had taken as a babe into God's house. The retiring judge is doomed to death by the judge-elect, and soon we find Eli with his neck broken, Hophni and Phinehas dead, the Ark of the Covenant in the hands of the Philistines, and Ichabod written over the house of Eli.

Now as Eli is one of the worst fathers, of whom we have a record in the Bible, so Job is, I think, one of the best. Scripture reports that this man "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." To him there were born seven sons and three daughters, presenting the picture of a united family given to hospitality and a full social life, the inherent dangers of which were ever before Job. Therefore, "It was so when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." Let those of us who are parents not forget how much our sons and daughters need our prayers, especially when they are too old to brook reprimand and correction. Like Job, we shall do well to pray with and for them, and in the light of the perfect sacrifice of Christ we shall plead with God that they shall be brought to a true and saving knowledge of Christ through the merit of His atoning death.

The New Testament Scripture

read and its lesson are well known and permit of great brevity of exposition. Here we have a delightful picture of the benefits accruing from early instruction in the sacred writings, from which in all probability Timothy learned the alphabet as well as the narratives of abiding moral and spiritual value, which his mother and grandmother imparted with such fidelity. These, be it noted, were Old Testament Scriptures, but when Timothy was led by grace, through Paul's instrumentality, to faith in Christ Jesus he did not find that the Old Testament teaching was obsolete and without value. Rather did he find that all the highways of the Old lead to the New, and that the Christ who is latent in the Old, is the One whom Paul preached.

Hence Paul is able to exhort him, saying, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." I believe the reference is to his mother and grandmother, and notice that it is two-fold. From them he had learned the Scriptures—that was by word of lip: through them he had been assured of their power and truth; that, I believe, was by their life. Happy they who have had the goodly heritage of Bible teaching buttressed by godly example. We all know that the mother is the hub of the family circle. We recognize what a large part mothers have played in the religious instruction of the young, but Christian fathers must see to it that they do not shirk their responsibilities in this matter. "And ye fathers," says the apostle, "provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord."

This will involve instruction in the Scriptures which to-day, as ever, are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." That is to say, the Scriptures given

by God are designed to provide authoritative teaching; to show us where we have gone wrong; to direct us as to how we may mend our ways and walk in the paths of righteousness and truth, and to provide discipline in righteousness. May God help us all to fulfil our parental responsibilities and may His rich blessing rest upon our homes.

## THE NAME OF GOD.

J. G. BELLETT

**T**HE revelation of the name of God shines gradually brighter and brighter as dispensations advance. This is a great subject.

In Genesis 1, it is simply "God" that we see and hear. It is "God" who goes through the six days' work and then rests on the seventh. But in Genesis 2 it is "the Lord God" that we see and hear. And these are two stages of God's revelation of Himself. In the first chapter we see Him coming forth, as God simply, for His own **delight** and **glory**. He takes full delight in the work, beholding it all to be very good, and He glorifies Himself by the work, setting over it one in His own image, the representative of Himself. But in the second, we see "the Lord God," that is God in a covenanted character, God entered upon purposes and plans for the blessing of His creature. And, therefore, much of the previous detail of the work, as it proceeded under the hand of "God" is omitted, and many things are brought into view which had no place before. Thus we have in strong relief, in which we had not at

all in the first chapter, the garden and the river, the manner of creating the man, of investing him with dominion, of forming the woman, and of instituting their union; we have also the mystic trees, and the commandment with its penalty, for all these concerned the place and blessing of the creature in covenant with "the Lord God."

Thus, did He begin to unfold His name to us; and after these first notices of "God" and "the Lord God," we get the name "God Almighty," published to Abram. This was a further revelation of Himself. And this was done when Abram was "past age," and had nothing to lean upon but the almightiness, or all-sufficiency of God (Gen. 17: 1). In this name which declared this needed sufficiency, God led him and Isaac, and Jacob after him; for they were all strangers and pilgrims on the earth, having nothing but the promise of an Almighty Friend for their stay and staff (Gen. 28: 35: 48). In process of time, however, God was known to His children by another name. Bringing them into the

covenant, into the promised inheritance, He calls Himself "Jehovah," that is, the covenant God of Israel (Exod. 6: 1-6). And, under God, as Jehovah, Israel take their seat in Canaan.

But still, all this did not communicate God in the full glory of His name. There was **grace** in God, and gifts by grace, which these ways of His did not full unfold. But this is done in the name which is now published to us — the name of "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." This is the full name or glory of our God; and grace, and the gifts of **grace**, are effectually brought to us by that dispensation which publishes it.

Thus it is not until the present age that the full name and glory of our God was published. The Father had been working, it is true, in all ages of the Jewish times; but still, Israel was put nationally under God simply as Jehovah. The revelation of the Father had to wait for the ministry of the Son, and certain dispensations had to finish their course ere the Son could come forth. The Son could not have been the minister of the law: such ministry would not have been worthy of Him who dwelt in the bosom of the **Father**. It was committed to angels. And the Son did not come forth in ministry till the great salvation was ready to be published (Heb. 2: 1-3). So the manifestation of the Holy Ghost waited for its due time. The Holy Ghost could not wait on the ministry of the law any more than could the Son. Smoke and lightning and the voice of thunder were there; but the Holy Ghost came forth with His gifts and powers on the publication

of that great salvation. The Spirit of God could not be a spirit of bondage, gendering fear. The law may do that, but the Holy Ghost must gender confidence. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Till the Son of God had finished His work, the Holy Ghost could not come forth. The heart must first be purged from an evil conscience, so that the temple might be sanctified for the indwelling Spirit, and the holy furniture (that is, the spirit of liberty and adoption, and the knowledge of glory) must be prepared for this temple; **and all this could be done only by the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son**. The revelation of the Holy Ghost waited for these things. He had been, it is true, the holy Power in all from the beginning. He had spoken by the prophets. He was the strength of judges and kings. He was the power of faith, of service, and of suffering, in all the people of God. But all this was below the place which He now takes in the church. His dwelling in us, as in His temple, had not been of old; but now He does so dwell, spreading out a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy.

As the Spirit of **wisdom**, He gives us "the mind of Christ," spiritual senses for the discerning of good and evil. As the Spirit of **worship**, He enables us to call God "Father," and Jesus "Lord." He also makes intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. He sheds abroad in the heart "the love of God," and causes us "to abound in hope." He is **in** us a well of water springing up into everlasting life; and He is the source also of "rivers

of living waters," flowing forth **from** us to refresh the weary. And He forms the saints together as "a spiritual house," where "spiritual sacrifices" are offered; no longer admitting "a worldly sanctuary," and "carnal ordinances;" for they are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit; and gifts, causing them all to grow up into Christ in all things, are dispensed among them.

These are some of the ways of the Holy Ghost in His kingdom within the saint: these are His works which shine in the place of His dominion. He is there an Earnest, an Unction, and a Witness. He tells us "plainly of the Father," and "takes of the things of Christ to "show them to us." His presence in us is so pure, that there is no evil that He does not resent and grieve over (Eph. 4: 30); and yet so tender and sympathizing that there is nothing

of godly sorrow that He does not feel and groan over (Rom. 8: 26). He causes hope to abound; He imparts the sense of full divine favour; He reads to our conscience a title to calm and entire assurance. There is nothing of feebleness and narrowness, or uncertainty in the place of His power. His operations savour of a **kingdom**, and a kingdom of **God** too, full of beauty and strength.

We have to own how little we live in the virtue and sunshine of it; but still, this is what it is in itself, though our narrow and hindered hearts so poorly possess themselves of it. And his handiwork is to have its praise from us; and His glory in His temple is to be declared. It is well to be humbled at times, by testing ourselves in reference to such an indwelling kingdom; but the kingdom itself is not to be so measured.

## BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTERS 10: 1 — 11: 18)

**T**HE record of the things that come to pass, under the sixth trumpet and second woe, does not come to an end with chapter 9. We have to read on to chapter 11: 14 before we get the words, "the second woe is past." After the opening of the sixth seal and an account of the immediate results, we had the angelic action, recorded in chapter 7 and the early verses of chapter 8, as a kind of appendix to it. Now, after the sounding of the sixth trumpet, angelic action is recorded, and also the way in which a witness to God and His claims will

be raised up on earth, as an appendix before the seventh and final trumpet sounds.

The close of chapter 9 showed us a state of affairs amongst rebellious men which could hardly be exceeded in its depravity and wilfulness. Chapter 10 opens with a vision of an Angel of peculiar majesty and glory, who announces a speedy ending of God's mysterious dealings with the earth. Thus the final blow that is to fall is preceded by solemn and ample warning in the mercy of God.

In this mighty Angel we see again the One who formerly acted as the Angel of Jehovah's presence—our Lord Jesus Christ. The description of Him in verse 1 agrees very much with that given in chapter 1: 14—16. None but He has a face like the sun. Cloud and rainbow and pillars of fire are also characteristic of Deity. His voice moreover was of highest power and majesty, which had as its echo or reverberations the seven thunders, which surely speak of further judgment actions. The seals, the trumpets, the vials are all made public but the thunders are unrecorded by express command. It is a solemn thought that though many details of the Divine judgments are revealed, there are to be judgments beyond anything made known to us.

The Angel stood with His right foot on the sea and His left on the earth: that is, the whole world is dominated by Him, whether the unstable, turbulent masses or more stable and organized kingdoms. This will be the true situation then—as seen by John and revealed to us—just before the time arrives when God will publicly put all things under His feet. Thus He is viewed as dominating the entire scene, though for a short time yet His supremacy is not manifested nor acknowledged by men.

There is, however, the solemn oath and proclamation, of which verses 5—7 speak. If we are right in identifying this "mighty Angel" with our Lord, in swearing "by Him that liveth for ever and ever," He was really swearing by Himself, as when the promise was made to Abraham (Heb. 6: 13). That was an oath for blessing: **this** an oath for

judgment; but both are alike **immutable**. The word, "time," at the end of verse 6 should be, "delay." The full stroke of Divine judgment had been held back in the longsuffering and patience of God, but the atrocious nature of the evil, together with the utter lack of repentance, exposed at the end of chapter 9, was now precipitating the climax, to be reached when the seventh trumpet sounded. At last the cup of man's iniquity was full.

"The mystery of God" (verse 7) is of course the mystery of His ways and dealings with men in relation to their sin. Contemplating more particularly God's ways and judgments with Israel as a nation, the Apostle Paul had to exclaim, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11: 33). What is this but a confession that to the most enlightened of the Lord's servants His ways and judgments are full of mystery. At present God is acting behind the scenes and we cannot penetrate the veil, but when He brings His judgments into the light of day, the mystery of it will vanish away and be finished. What the prophets have declared will be fulfilled, and the rightness of all His dealings through the ages will be seen, as well as of His final judgment at the Second Advent.

The episode, which John relates in verses 8—11, reminds us of the similar incident in the visions of Ezekiel, related in chapters 2 and 3 of his prophecy. Take note of the underlying thought that what the servant of God gives out in the way of prophecy or instruction must first be eaten, digested, assimilated by himself. Nothing is more ruinous

spiritually than to proclaim and parade our knowledge of truth, which as yet we have not really made our own in meditation, in prayer, in experience. The acquisition of fresh truth is sweet and exhilarating as honey, but when inwardly digested and assimilated it ever displaces flesh and self and the world, and that is a bitter process. This is so, even if, as here, the little book is concerned with judgment which is to fall on others and not on oneself. Twice the book is spoken of as "open," so in this short chapter we get things that were uttered and yet sealed and not to be published, and also things which though open were to be eaten by the prophet before he conveyed them to others. Even in the solemn matter of judgment there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak.

In the opening verses of chapter II, John has not only to see and hear, but to act. He was to measure the temple, the altar and the worshippers with a divinely-given reed. Once again the language is symbolic, for though a measure of length may suit a temple or an altar, it is quite inapplicable to worshippers in a literal sense. The thought seems to be that these three come under divine scrutiny and are taken account of, whilst the outer court is ignored as being under Gentile feet. This indicates, we gather, that God is going to support what is of Himself in the midst of His earthly people, Israel, and also maintain a remnant according to His election, but the "court," the large outer circle, identified with "the holy city," is to be defiled for the stated period. We ourselves are now in the "times of the Gentiles," during

which, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke 21: 24). This period has been running since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, but there is to be a specially intense treading under foot of the holy city for these 42 months. The court is not measured so that the hostile powers are given full scope.

But though they act unhinderedly, they are not permitted to pollute without God raising up a witness against them, and verse 3 speaks of this. The witness lasts for 1,260 days, which according to Jewish computation is exactly the 42 months of the previous verse. As to external things, the witnesses were marked by deepest humiliation, expressed by being clothed in sackcloth, but from a spiritual standpoint marked by the shining of a light, which is divinely given and supported. The reference clearly is to Zechariah 4, only here each witness is symbolized by an olive tree and a candlestick. The olive tree supplies the oil, and the oil feeds the light. God is the God of the earth, and though the holy city is trodden down He has not relinquished His claim to the earth. So before He makes good His claim in irresistible power He maintains His witness in the face of the foe. So much so, that for the time of their testimony they are invulnerable. It is their assailants who die, not they.

Verse 6 shows that these two witnesses have the characteristics of both Elijah and Moses, so evidently they wield immense power. Yet it is not the kind of power we find characterizing believers of this dispensation, who are rather to be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering

with joyfulness" (Col. 1: 11). In the earliest years, when apostles still wielded miraculous powers, none of them slew men, or shut heaven, or smote the earth with plagues. Such displays of power suit the Old Testament, but not the New. What then shall we deduce from verse 6? Simply that here we are no longer in the present dispensation of the grace of the Gospel and the calling out of the Church. We are again on the ground of **government** and not of **grace**. It confirms what has been advanced; namely, at this time the Church has been taken to heaven.

The witnesses are invulnerable only until their testimony is completed. Then they are slain under the beast that ascends from the abyss, of whom we get details in chapter 13. Their witness was centred in Jerusalem, and there their dead bodies lay. Jerusalem had been called the "holy city" in verse 2: it is that in the purpose of God. With the slain witnesses lying in its street it is called the "great city," which from a spiritual point of view is just "Sodom and Egypt." It is clearly identified by the statement, "where also our Lord was crucified."

Sodom has become symbolic of the world in its unbridled lust and wickedness, where man degrades himself below the level of the beasts, so that the cry of it arises for God's intervention in judgment. Egypt symbolizes the world with its magnificent exterior, the supplier of all that ministers to man's pleasures and fleshly gratification, but withal itself dominated by an idolatry that degrades, and which even enslaves the people of God if they fall under its power. All this may be **great** in

man's eyes but it certainly is not **holy**. This is what Jerusalem is to become by the treading under foot of the Gentiles and the domination of the beast from the abyss. In such a city the witnesses die, and the rejoicings over their end are to be great.

Verse 10 mentions, "they that dwell upon the earth,"—the earth-dwellers, of whom we have before spoken. The people generally, according to verse 9, will be glad, but these earth-dwellers rejoice exceedingly and hold high festivity, because the witness of the two prophets "tormented" them. We can quite understand this, for the same kind of thing can be seen to-day. True witness to Christ in the Gospel is opposed by the careless world, but it arouses specially fierce resentment and repudiation by present-day modernists, whose effort is to degrade the faith of Christ to a mere scheme for earthly improvements, denying its heavenly origin and the heavenly end to which it leads. Its truth they simply cannot abide; it torments them.

The jubilation of the earth-dwellers, and of the persecutors generally, is however to be short-lived. After  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days they rise from death and ascend to heaven in a cloud. Their enemies behold it, so that their triumph is complete. They suffer under the beast, but are caught up to a heavenly portion, not an earthly one. Their **going-up** presaged the speedy **fall** of the beast and his satellites.

The question naturally arises: are we to understand these verses as predicting the rise of two actual men, or is it rather that God raises up and

maintains, for as long as suits Him, a sufficient and powerful testimony having the characteristics of both Elijah and Moses? We incline to the latter view and that especially because of the symbolic character of the whole book. We think then that they indicate—not a large and abundant testimony; that would be indicated by 3 and not 2—a **sufficient** testimony, divinely, indeed miraculously, preserved and sustained at this epoch — the darkest in the world's history since the cross of our Lord. If we are right in this, the witnesses may be identified with, or at least included in, those "be-headed for the witness of Jesus," in chapter 20: 4, who "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The great point of instruction for us to-day is the way in which God maintains His own testimony and yet terminates it as soon as its work is done. This instruction stands, whichever view of the two witnesses we take.

At the finish of their story the triumph of the two was complete, and this will be the finish of the story for all God's rejected and persecuted witnesses. They went to **heaven**; at the same time a great earthquake smote the **earth**. They **ascended**; a tenth part of the city that persecuted **fell**. The **Spirit of life** from God had entered into them; seven thousand of their foes were plunged into **death**. Those not slain were filled with fear and compelled to give glory to the God of heaven. It looked as if they were still reluctant to admit Him to be the God of the earth.

This episode concludes the second woe, which is the sixth trumpet, and

we are told that the seventh trumpet and third woe follows quickly, for there is to be no longer delay, as we saw in chapter 10: 6. There is therefore hardly any interval between the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses and the final act, which brings man's day to a close and ushers in the kingdom.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet does not bring to pass some fresh infliction similar to the preceding trumpets. Great voices in heaven proclaim that which is the end of all God's judgments—the establishment of the kingdom "of our Lord and of His Christ." This phrase reminds us of Psalm 2: 2, where, "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed." This they have done all along, but here their proud opposition is quelled, and the reign of the Lord by His Anointed is established. Once established, His dominion abides. Other Scriptures inform us how the kingdom of a thousand years will end, and the eternal state begin. But the tragic rebellion which is to close the thousand years will not mean any interruption in the reign. Our verse says, "He shall reign for ever and ever." From this point of view the millennium and the eternal state are considered as one.

Verses 16—18 give us the reaction of the 24 elders—the heavenly saints—to this tremendous climax. The first thing is their **worship**. To-day false professors of religion abound, whose reaction is **criticism**, when they hear of the kingdom of God, enforced by righteous judgment. They denounce the idea of a God who acts in righteous judgment. In

heaven it will provoke not criticism but worship. This is a striking fact.

This merges into thanksgiving. They address God by the names in which He revealed Himself of old as the Governor of men and nations—Jehovah, Elohim, El Shaddai, the Eternal One—nothing before Him; nothing beyond Him, supreme and unchallengeable. He is known to us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but this name of love and near relationship would not come in suitably here, where His acts in judgment are being proclaimed. His reign in righteous authority, and not His saving grace, is what is now before us.

Verse 18 summarizes in a remarkable way the things that come to pass when God establishes His kingdom. They are not mentioned in chronological order, as we might have been inclined to place them. For instance, the judgment of the dead does not take place till the end of the thousand years, as chapter 20: 12 shows. Our verse states the results achieved, first in wrath, and then in discriminatory judgment, and not the order in which they will be achieved. Each statement is worthy of careful note.

When Jehovah and His Christ take the kingdom to reign for ever and ever, "the nations **were angry.**" This statement is sufficient to demolish altogether the false idea that the Gospel is going to convert the world, so that the kingdom will be established as the fruit of Gospel effort, and the nations **will be delighted to see it!** Again, the kingdom will be established as the result of the coming of God's **wrath.** This

tells the same tale, and is in agreement with Psalm 2 also. When the age of the Gospel closes and wrath comes, bringing with it righteous judgment, it will extend over a long period, only ending in "the time of the dead that they should be judged"—the final scene of wrath, as we have just seen.

But then, as well as the outpouring of wrath on manifested evil, there will be a condition of mixture, where discrimination is necessary. This had been predicted by our Lord in Matthew 13: 41—43, and here it is fulfilled and accomplished. The prophets, the saints, the God-fearing will have their reward in the glory of the kingdom, whereas the destroyers of the earth will be themselves destroyed.

All sin is destructive in one way or another. As man has become increasingly inventive and wilful, his powers of destruction have increased. In Europe and elsewhere to-day we see a sample of what is coming. But underlying all these powers of physical and material destruction, now so manifest, there is the propaganda of the destroyer himself—the deceiver, the father of lies. The real root of the terrible mischief is here. The primary destructive force is found in the region of **mind**, not **matter**: in false religion, false philosophy, masquerading as science, but really, "science, falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6: 20). These false ideas reach into the moral, the political, even the material world, and to-day they are manifestly leading men, who are intoxicated with them, into uncontrollable violence. "Them that destroy the earth," under cover of

improving conditions, whether materially, socially or religiously, are becoming more and more numerous and powerful.

The establishment of the glorious kingdom of our Lord will mean the destruction of all such. Then at last earth's golden age will begin.

## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

Recently I have heard quoted quite frequently, "The sure mercies of David." Would you tell me in your magazine what these really are?  
—COCKERMOUTH.

**I**N Isaiah 55, where this phrase first occurs, we still have before us the results that are to be achieved through the death and resurrection of the Servant of Jehovah, as predicted in chapter 53. Chapter 54 deals entirely with Israel. Chapter 55 widens out to "everyone that thirsteth," and therefore includes Gentiles. The word in verse 3 is, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your souls shall live," which will be true for all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. All such will be brought into blessing under "an everlasting covenant," which is described as "the sure mercies of David."

The covenant of law is not everlasting, and was never intended to be. The covenant, which Jeremiah predicts, is the everlasting one, for it is based on grace, as was God's covenant of promise to Abraham, and the mercies promised to David in 2 Samuel 7: 8—17, and again in 1 Chronicles 17: 7—15. Indeed the very raising up of David as a victorious king after the complete

breakdown of Saul was a signal act of mercy.

Now when we turn to Acts 13: 34, we find the Apostle Paul quoting the phrase, as involving and indicating the resurrection of Christ. He used it in a way that would specially appeal to his Jewish hearers. The mercies promised to David were to be made effective and sure in his far greater Son, who had just been slain by their leaders. God's promises, vested in Christ, would fail did He not rise from the dead. His resurrection had to be, and the quotation proved it.

We should say then that, in the more restricted Old Testament sense, the phrase signifies all those great blessings for Israel and the nations, that will be established in the age to come under Christ the true King; every one of them a matter of mercy and not of merit. In the larger New Testament sense it may be applied to all that the mercy of God will establish in the risen and glorified Christ, whether for the earth or the heavens.

The gifts and the calling of God admit of no regret on His part. He may repent of creation (Gen. 6), never of what grace gave in promise to Abraham and to his seed, never of His call, which was first illustrated publicly in the father of the faithful. According to that "election" He will yet break their stony heart and put a new spirit within them.

## “ABBA FATHER.”

W. BRAMWELL DICK

WE wonder if all our readers have noticed the three occasions in Scripture when this expression, “Abba Father,” is used. Our Lord’s own use of it in the Garden of Gethsemane naturally comes first. It is recorded only once and that in Mark 14: 36.

For our blessed Lord it was a night of agony. The moment had arrived the like of which He had not experienced before. He was going to taste death in all its bitterness. Men were not unaccustomed to death, they saw it daily in their homes, their families, those near and dear to them. Nor was He a stranger to it, but He came into contact with it only to show His power over it, and to give back those who had been dead, restoring them to life. But he had not tasted death; to Him it was a stranger. Now He was about to taste it in all its bitterness in a way that no mere man could taste it, for He tasted death for every man. Now it confronted Him in all its horror, and we are not surprised that He shrank from it. He the Eternal Son, had come into Manhood for the express purpose that “through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2: 14, 15).

The moment had come, looked forward to by Him from Eternity, when He as Man should taste death, be forsaken by God, maligned by man, left alone by those who had companied with Him. Shrinking from it, He told His Father that all

things were possible unto Him, and He asked Him to take away the cup. Yet in the quenchless devotedness of His heart to His Father’s will, He immediately added, “Not what I will, but what Thou wilt.” Thus His Father’s will was His will; nothing could turn Him aside, onward to the Cross He went. On the Cross He died, the Father’s will accomplished, the sin question settled, the foundation laid for the accomplishment of that which had been planned before the world was, the cost His precious blood.

We believe that “Abba ” was the very word that He Himself used. It was first used by our precious Lord, but as a result of His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, we are permitted now to use it as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. It is ours now to know that we “have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father” (Rom. 8: 15). Can we conceive the greatness and grandeur, not to speak of the marvel, of this?

We have been taken up into the family of God. We know God as our Father, we look up, and in the liberty of children, and in the dignity of sons we say to Him, “Abba Father.” Every question settled, there is not a shade of distance, not a trace of fear. Oh that we knew more of this marvellous relationship! It is one of the crowning points of the wonderful Epistle to the Romans. How often have we read it? Someone may say, “It is very elementary!” It is exceedingly profound, and we should like to

scale its heights, to fathom its depths, to revel in its breadth and length.

In the early chapters of this Epistle the Apostle opens up to us the Gospel. He tells us the sort of people for whom the Gospel is intended, and they are a bad lot. Chapters one to three make that plain, and there is no exception. But those who are so incorrigibly bad can be not only forgiven and cleared of every charge, justified by God, but also set down in His favour—"Not a cloud above, not a spot within." They are set free, too, from sin's dominion. That is marvellous, but *not all*. As our text tells us, we are sons of God. We have the Spirit of Adoption and now we cry, "Abba Father."

"So near, so very near to God;  
Nearer we could not be.  
For in the Person of His Son  
We are as near as He."

All this is too wonderful for words, as we contemplate it we can only worship and adore. The Son's place as the risen and exalted Man is ours. Oh that we realized more the exceeding riches of God's grace and His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus! Then no longer with lisping, stammering tongue, but out of overflowing hearts, we should look up and offer to Him that which would be so agreeable to Him, "the sacrifice of praise to God continually."

Now we may turn to Galatians 4: 6. Here the Apostle has some serious things to write to brethren who had heard the Gospel but who came far short in their apprehension and appreciation of it. While pointing out why and how they came

short of it, He presents it in its fulness, its grandeur; glorifying God and exalting Christ.

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." Observe! They did not receive the Spirit in order to become sons, they were sons, forgiven, justified, cleared of every charge, and freed from the bondage of the law, and because they were sons God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying Abba Father. Let us tarry here, and challenge ourselves, as to whether we realise the dignity of our position? Do we seek to live according to it? The Apostle's way of pointing out their failure to realize how highly they had been blessed, and to enter into the dignity of it, was not by denouncing how they had come short, but by presenting the truth in its grandeur and fulness. Thus he would lead them into the apprehension of that which we shall know and enjoy through God's eternal day.

Then let us not be content now with simply knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we are going to heaven, but let us seek to know more and more of the height and depth of all that God has in His infinite grace provided for our present as well as our eternal enjoyment.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! . . . For of Him, and through Him and to Him, are all things to whom be glory for ever. Amen."  
(Rom. 11: 33, 36).

# "THY GENTLENESS HATH MADE ME GREAT."

A. J. POLLOCK

**T**HESE words were written by David in Psalm 18: 35, celebrating his deliverance from his great enemy, King Saul. They are surely capable of being applied to many others beside himself.

There are two ways in which God can approach man: either in government or in grace. The former line he **must** take, for God is the moral Governor of the Universe, and sin cannot remain unpunished. The latter is a matter of His good pleasure. The poet Browning seems to have grasped this when he wrote,

"There may be a Heaven.  
There must be a Hell."

Why did he say, "There **must** be a Hell"? Simply because God **must** be **just**. Why did he write, "There **may** be a Heaven"? Because God may call to earth or to Heaven as He pleases. And in order that Heaven may be offered to men, the claims of holy government had to be met, and they were fully met by our Lord in His atoning death upon the cross. Our Lord could take up the words of the Psalmist as His experience on the cross: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold on Me" (Psa. 116: 3). So now, grace reigns "through **righteousness** unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5: 21).

But now let this striking passage be exemplified by the case of Abraham. He was brought up amid rank heathendom in Ur of the Chaldees (see Joshua 24: 2). Left in that condition he would have sunk in all the

superstitions and impurities connected with the worship of gods of man's own making. Yet he stands out on the sacred page as a great man. What made him great? No less than thirteen and a half chapters are taken up with his history. It is a wonderful story of how the knowledge of God, and His gracious dealings with Abraham made him truly great.

For information as to the beginning we are indebted to the martyr Stephen, when he tells us, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia" (Acts 7: 2). Could anything happening to sinful man be more wonderful than this? A poor dark heathen to have revealed to him the true God—"The God of glory!" In one instant a mighty change took place in Abraham. From that moment everything was seen in a different complexion. His orientation was completely different. How elevated is man when he gets a true sense of God, and is lifted up from the natural degradation that marks a fallen race. We see this very clearly in the case before us.

Take a step forward. Abraham was promised by God a son. Well-stricken in years, and his wife, Sarah, not only barren but long past the age of bearing children, Abraham said in his heart, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" (Gen. 17: 17). On a previous occasion the Lord told him that his seed should be as the stars innumer-

able. Abraham did not stagger at this promise, but believed God. So we read, "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15: 6).

Here is a wonderful sequel of the God of glory appearing to him. We begin to see a stature of moral greatness in Abraham. What a position to be in—righteous before God, and yet in a world of sinners. This is not human glory that is marked by pomp and show and human power. No, this is moral greatness that goes with humility, for all the blessing that Abraham got was conferred upon him.

Then God put a great test upon Abraham. He told him to offer his son, Isaac, the child of promise, upon an altar on one of the mountains of which He would tell him. Abraham responded to that test. Was there ever a test similar to this one, short of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, of which this incident is but a faint type?

Think of the moral greatness of Abraham at this testing moment. On the third day of his travel to Mount Moriah at God's command, he said to the young men that were with him, "Abide ye here with the ass: and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen. 22: 5). Should we ever have associated **worship** with such an errand? And look at the sublime faith of the man. He did not anticipate leaving with breaking heart the dead body of his well-beloved son, slain by his own hand. He believed not only himself, but also Isaac would **return** alive. That this is no ill-supported fancy we can see in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We

read, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that received the promises offered up his only begotten son . . . accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11: 17-19).

Is there not moral greatness here? No wonder that whilst the original, most wonderful creation is compressed into ten words, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1: 1), the story of God's dealing with Abraham stretches into so many chapters. What a contrast he is to the man of the world, for he walked before God. In the New Testament we learn that Abraham had the wonderful title, "The Friend of God" (James 2: 23). What an honour!

What made Abraham great? Surely the gentleness of God, not the terrifying demand that at a later period made the very lawgiver, Moses, say, "I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. 12: 21). No, it was the gracious revelation of Himself as a covenant-making God, the God of glory, that started Abraham on the life we have been very cursorily surveying.

We might pass on to Moses, that great servant of God, or to Paul, that great Apostle to the Gentiles, and learn similar lessons.

Moreover we may come to ourselves, and recognize that all that is worth while in us before God is the result of the revelation of Himself in Christ, and the result of faith, and the new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit. We, believers, are not **great in our own eyes**, if we have taken our measure in the presence

of God, but we certainly are blessed and lifted high above the level of this evil world, and have the light of Heaven shining in our souls and illuminating our path to glory.

Consider for one moment, the giving of the law, speaking of God's government in this world. Then contrast this with the humble birth of our Lord into this world, with the gracious words of the angel, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 10, 11). Could anything be more captivating than this?

But at what price did our Lord earn the title of Saviour! See Him on the cross. There "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85: 10). See government and grace blending together, without which salvation could not be righteously ministered. But dwell on the grace side. Can anything be more appealing than this?

And as we learn all that the Person and work of our Lord means, and all that flows therefrom, we find that God's gentleness makes great all those, who respond to such wooings divine.

## REFLECTIONS ON PSALM 23.

J. HOUSTON

**E**XPOSITORS differ in their interpretation of this Psalm. Some confine it entirely to the individual. Others include the remnant of Israel. While others take in the whole nation of Israel. We would say, the **flock** is in view, though the **individual** appreciation of the Shepherd's care is expressed. We often find one as representative of all. The image of the psalm is of the Shepherd leading home His flock, through the sandy desert. First of all, there is the oasis where the sheep rest at noon; afterwards, the gloomy gorge through which they journey, called "the valley of the shadow of death," and lastly, the home where they safely arrive and for ever rest.

Strangely enough, this is the three-stage journey Israel had on their way from Egypt to Canaan.

First of all, they lighted on Elim, where they encamped under the spreading branches of the palm-trees and beside the clear springing wells. Here they had the "green pastures" and "still waters," and were restored from the fatigue and exhaustion of their journey. We can easily picture the tired-out and footsore flock enjoying this refreshment in the oasis, and thus being fitted to continue their journey. It is a scene with which Orientals are familiar, and it reminds us of the enquiry the spouse makes in the Song of Solomon: "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon" (chap. 1: 7). In plain words, this is an enquiry for Elim (Exodus 15: 27).

But refreshment is not for ever; it is but a restorative of exhausted

strength, and stimulus to move on homewards. The flock may **rest** at **Elim**, but cannot **dwelt** there. Hence the Shepherd leads on through the desert. The sheep follow, and fear no evil because of His presence. The rod of direction and staff of support and sustenance are symbols of comfort. To have sure direction and unfailing sustenance in a trackless waste is reassuring and strengthening.

In this second stage of their journey they learn lessons which never could be learned at **Elim**. Hungry and thirsty, with nothing but desert sands around them, their schooling properly begins. How tardy they were in learning their lessons! It is remarkable that the exodus from Egypt and the season of refreshment at **Elim** were all experienced in the brief space of six weeks; whereas the tract that lay between **Elim** and the banks of **Jordan** extended over a period of 40 years. Normally this latter part would have been accomplished in eleven days (see Deut. 1: 2). But their course was not straight; they meandered about in an aimless fashion to all appearances, quite out of their course, and thus the time was spent.

It was not without direction and profit, however, for God was leading and teaching them. The manna came day by day, and it was their food in this part of their journey. Reviewing it, Moses said, God "humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna . . . 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. 8: 3).

Christ, "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5: 8). He suffered hunger, and was obedient (Matt. 4: 2). Israel suffered hunger, and were disobedient. They murmured against God; lusted after leeks, garlic and onions in Egypt, and were on the point of stoning Moses and Aaron. Manna spoke of a humbled Christ, dependent and obedient. When their soul loathed His food, angels' food, it showed their state of lustfulness and unbelief which ended in their overthrow in the desert. The cause of all was the sad fact that they went back in thought to Egypt and not forward to Canaan. But it is not the unfaithfulness of the sheep the psalm presents; it is the faithfulness of the Shepherd.

Finally, they cross **Jordan** and enter into the land. After all the reproach of Egypt was removed from them, they ate the "old corn" of the land, and then the manna ceased. A new scene was entered. They were **at home**, in the enjoyment of all God had purposed for them, on the ground of His unconditional promises. In Canaan, we see the purpose of God; this was Israel's home. In the desert, we see the ways of God; this was Israel's schooling. The latter led to the former.

The manna and the springing well  
Suffice for every need;  
And Eshcol's grapes the story tell  
Of where Thy path doth lead.

Hitherto we have spoken of Israel. What about ourselves? What have we in the psalm? We have all that Israel had in it, as we appropriate it by faith, though on much higher ground. We form part

of the Church, which is the body of Christ. Our calling is heavenly; Israel's calling is earthly. When these important differences are kept in mind, we can draw all the comfort the psalm provides.

It would appear from the Gospels that we have a three-stage journey home. For instance, the Disciples were led out to **Bethany** in Luke 24: 50-53; to **Galilee** in Matt. 28: 10-20; to **Jerusalem** in John 20: 19-23. Without forcing things into a set mould, or spiritualising unduly, we can see a relation between Elim and Bethany; the desert and Galilee; the land and Jerusalem.

Bethany means the "house of dates," or "the place of Palm-trees," and this is just Elim. There the Lord was refreshed in His lifetime; and it would appear, from the close of Luke's Gospel, that the spirit of love, and gracious ministry one to another, which permeated the home at Bethany, was to continue with us till the Lord's return. It was in the act of blessing them there that the Lord was parted from them and taken into heaven. He is gone for a season; but His blessing in Bethany remains, in its strict spiritual sense. It was an oasis to Him in life; it is an oasis to us.

Galilee was the place of His rejection. At the beginning of His public ministry He went there, and it is described as "the region and shadow of death" (see Matt. 4: 12-17). Surely this corresponds to "the valley of the shadow of death" in the psalm. In Galilee it was said of Him that He had no place to lay His head—a homeless Stranger. Now, during His absence, we are associated with Him in that path of His rejection, and learn our

desert lessons. There we hunger, as His disciples hungered, when they ate the corn from the fields through which they passed. There we learn with Him, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Salutory lessons! Oh, may we learn them well!

Jerusalem was the place where the Church was formed. In the upper room, where the disciples had gathered together on the ground of the message sent to them, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He met them, and took up His place in the midst of them. Associated with Him, His Father, our Father; His God, our God, the Church is formed. This corresponds to the land of Canaan, for it is the fulfilment of the purpose of God. God's ways with us may be figuratively seen at Bethany and Galilee; but His purpose is seen at Jerusalem. And this is our home; not at Jerusalem as a mere place, but in what was formed there, the Church, in all its heavenly association with Himself.

Our position and blessings go far beyond anything experienced in Canaan by Israel; and when this is kept in mind, we can read the last part of the psalm in another light. Our table is spread with all that God's purpose has secured for us in our heavenly union with Christ in the Father's house. Enemies on earth there may be, and even in the heavens (see Ephes. 6: 12), for that matter; but the closed door, and the presence of the Lord, are security against foes. The sweet feast of love divine will have no intrusion from any evil source. Our head is anointed with oil; for the

Spirit, typified by oil, is breathed upon us, by the risen Lord Himself. Our cup overflows with heavenly joy, "joy unspeakable and full of glory." And our eternal abode is in the Father's house.

This is the "old corn" of the land for us; and we shall eat it when

Bethany's springs and Galilee's manna have ceased. We can thank God for the refreshment and the heavenly, sustaining manna, but they cease when we enter the Father's house, in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

## ETERNAL LIFE.

J. MCBROOM.

As to the Assembly: John 1: 3; 2 Tim. 1: 9—11; Titus 1: 2.

**T**HESSE words speak of a positive and specific blessing which for us is the fruit of divine purpose. It was ever in the Son and for man. No other of God's creatures get it, so far as we gather from Scripture. In His dispensational ways God has three companies before Him for blessing. They are the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God, or the Assembly. As to His ways in time God took up Israel, in whom He worked out the question of man's responsibility under the Law. That ended at the Cross with man's total failure. The unconditional promises of God centre in Christ; He has perfectly glorified God and all will yet be fulfilled. To the blessing of Israel will attach the blessing of the nations, and had they received their Messiah, the Kingdom would have been set up and earth's golden age begun. God, foreseeing this, had other things in view, things which emanate from His eternal counsels. In His ways with man the sufferings of Christ were to be followed by the glory, and assuredly this will be accomplished in its own time. Therefore when breaking off dealings with Israel a parenthetic gap commenced during which the

calling of the Church takes place. That being accomplished, and the time is now at hand, He resumes His ways with Israel in faithfulness to His promise, and they are set up in blessing, and the Gentile nations with them, as was His intention.

Then we have three companies brought into blessing and each get eternal life. Israel will be set at the head of the nations, under their Messiah, Son of David, with the blessings of the new covenant; after them the Gentile nations under Christ as Son of Man. The Church His assembly will be with Him in the heavens as Son of God, but knowing Him in all three ways, that is, Son of God, Son of Man and Son of David. This shows that eternal life has a different character attaching to it in each case. For both Jew and Gentile it will mean freedom from bondage and death, and a happy knowledge of God as in flesh and blood here. For the Church it is the fruit of eternal purpose in Christ in new creation, and lies outside of flesh and blood.

The remark has been made that the Lord did not tell us what eternal

life is. Now life is something that cannot be defined in human language, and therefore we are well advised not to attempt it. But is this a loss? No, indeed, in fact it is a gain as we shall see, for its origin in God and the wealth of its blessing, with its tastes, joys and pursuits are such as to fill the heart with praise and adoration.

Though we cannot exactly say what it is, we may say what it is not. For example, it is not mere eternal existence; that, the lost will have. Nor is the adjective 'eternal' to be taken to mean merely age-enduring or everlasting durability. It carries with it more the thought of relationship. Moreover it must not be taken to mean a deposit as if a certain something was put into man which would set him up in a way superior to what he had been. It is more an operation of the Spirit of God ON man, as a result of which he lives for God who was before morally dead. God breathed into man and he became a living soul, a natural man really. So through the Spirit of God we are made to live and he that was spiritually dead is made to live spiritually.

Now in the very nature of things this is a new creation. That which, with God, lay behind his past creation. Responsible life being forfeited through sin, God in mercy recreates man, but in a life that is outside of responsibility and cannot be forfeited—a life which He had in view for him from eternity to eternity. It means a moral foundation laid in the soul from which springs a new character, the character of Christ. Subjectively received, it is this life **by** which we

live; and objectively, the life **in** which we live. This may be illustrated from human life. A man goes forth to his labour and exerts himself in natural energy in the power of the living principle in his body. But what is the governing motive? His love for his wife and family. The power is kept up by eating, digestion and assimilation, so that there may be health and energy, but the latter includes his home, recreation, interests, politics, etc. Now in eternal life there is the living principle which results from being born of God, and the power of the Spirit which qualifies for a whole range of the divine interests. The object is now Christ and all that concerns Him and for this, life here in its interest and status can be given up. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth: but faith which worketh by love. Faith is the objective and love the subjective. Again, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation.

Scripture tells us where eternal life is: it is in Christ, and we have it by having Him. He is it: He brought it here and when going back to heaven did not take it away. He is much more as we know, for He is GOD, but this as creatures we cannot share. Life He gives us and we adore Him for it, for it is giving us Himself. It means a whole range of heavenly blessing which puts us intelligently before God in moral suitability to Himself, in association with Christ as sons in nature and calling. It imparts to us too the knowledge of the Father and the Son. In the former of these we learn that we have it as sons before Himself according to the good.

pleasure of His will; and in the latter, the home of divine affections between the Father and the Son is our portion. In both He has taken us into His confidence to impart to us the mystery of His will, which is to put His Son at the head of the creation in the fulness of time, and thus He commits to us the inner secrets and treasures of His intentions with regard to the present and to the day of coming glory.

Some of the marks of this blessing are seen in the first epistle of John. They are children begotten of God, and having His life and nature they have communion with the Father and the Son and with one another. They walk in the light as He is in the light and practice righteousness. They love God and one another: they know, and they know that they know, because they keep His commandments. They know, too, that they are in Him, because they keep His word, and then they are perfected in love. They look forward with boldness to the day of judgment because He who is Judge has already made them like Himself. But there is another side, and lest we should think that the above marks might lead to conceit or complacency it is well to look at it. They are human and need to be forgiven. They have sin and they dare not deny it. They sometimes fall into it, but He who is their life is also their Advocate with the Father as He is also the propitiation for their sins. As long as they are in here, in the nature of things prayer is called for, for they not only err but may even commit a sin unto death. Praying in the name of the Lord Jesus they are assured of an answer and get the victory over the world.

Other outstanding features of blessing are theirs, as for example salvation, sanctification and reconciliation. Being united to Christ, by the Holy Spirit given to dwell in them, they are members of His body, the Church, and by adoption have become sons in association with the Son before the Father, in that He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Now all these relationships and blessings are new and exist outside of our natural life as in Adam. We can understand therefore that this constitutes a new life in a new creation. In this way eternal life is the full blessing, covering all the other blessings, which are the features that go to fill it up. Morally therefore there is a new order of life outside the world.

As a company here on earth believers are viewed in a threefold way. First, **individually** as in the Kingdom of God, then **collectively** as the House or Family of God, and the third way is **organically**, as being united to Christ by the Spirit they form His Body. Every one has the Spirit and in that way is united to Christ in glory. If so, then it follows that they are united one with the other, constituting a potential fellowship of life and nature which is the life of Divine Persons.

In natural life all can trace their pedigree back to Adam, having his life and nature. Here is the sphere of flesh and blood: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee" (Matt. 16: 17), meaning the whole range of human nature. But believers are joined together by bonds indissoluble and in a strong framework of holy affections that nothing can break; not even death

can touch it! This is the sphere of eternal life. We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit to open it out and enrich each with the wealth of heaven, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and from within goes forth to all men the good news of salvation and eternal life.

The House of God is where He dwells to bless; and while all around there is moral dearth, like the famine in Egypt, there is abundance here. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy House; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life:

in Thy light shall we see light (Psa. 36: 8, 9). Here, like Joseph in Egypt, Christ is supreme in administration, but unlike Joseph He is the Bread He supplies, for the Bread of God is He who cometh down from heaven to give life unto the world. Other services He takes up in that House for the end in view is the service of praise. He has provided a priestly company for this service, and He leads them in the worship of God. In that way God has reached His end. Nor is it limited to the assembly come together, for the unbroken praises of God are kept up by Him who is the great Priest over the House of God.

## BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTERS II: 19—13: 10)

**T**HE last verse of chapter II is evidently the preface to the visions that follow, marking a fresh division of the book. Chapters 4 and 5 are a magnificent preface to the visions recorded from 6: 1 to 11: 18. There the sign was the rainbow and the throne. Here it is the temple and the ark of His testament. In that the visions deal with God securing a remnant for Himself, whether of Israel or of the Gentiles, and at the same time breaking the pride and power of men in the earth, and finally establishing His kingdom, and what is involved in this is stated succinctly in 11: 18. In this fresh section we are now to cover part of the same ground, but from another view-point.

The ark had been the throne of God in the midst of Israel, and the

temple was the shrine for it in the days of the kingdom established through David. All had been desecrated and destroyed on earth, but we are permitted to see that the real things, of which the others were only the shadows, were secured in heaven. David's greater Son is to be the supreme Ruler, exerting His authority through Israel on earth, and yet more widely through the church, as we shall presently see. God will fulfil and establish His covenant through judgment, hence the opening of the temple is accompanied by judgment, whether directly inflicted from heaven, or generated on earth—lightning, hail, etc., indicates the one; an earthquake indicates the other.

The point in this fresh section seems to be, not so much the estab-

lishing of the throne, as the question—Who is going to ascend the throne and thus dominate the earth? There is “that Man whom He hath ordained” (Acts 17: 31). But there is also a rival, as we are quickly notified—Satan, represented as a dragon. We shall also see his three chief agents—the two beasts of chapter 13, and the harlot of chapter 17. We are now to see these rival powers one by one disposed of, and thus the way cleared for Christ to ascend the throne.

In verses 1 and 3 of chapter 12 we should substitute “sign” for “wonder.” Two signs appeared in heaven, but that which they signified transpired on earth. The woman we judge to be Israel. She is invested with sun, moon and twelve stars, symbols of authority, for it is through Israel that the Divine authority will at last be made effective on earth. Clearly then we view Israel ideally, according to that which is in the purpose of God, and therefore in a light which up to the present has only been realized in that small part of the nation that we speak of as the godly remnant, and even there only imperfectly. Out of that godly remnant the Man-child sprang.

The second sign was that of the great red dragon. The woman had the symbols of heavenly authority: he had not that, but he was invested with heads and horns and crowns — really “diadems,” the symbols of royal estate—which indicated the wielding of immense power in the earth. Here, then, we have Satan, but clothing himself in the pomp and greatness of the fourth great world-empire of Daniel 7; that

is, the Roman. There is, however, the further feature that his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven; an allusion, it would appear to Isaiah 9: 15. We have “the prophet that speaketh lies” in the latter part of chapter 13, and he seduces and draws after him a third part of the lesser luminaries, who should shed light on the earth, and in result they apostatize from the position in which originally they were set.

Who shall occupy the throne? Judging as the world does, there would seem to be only one answer. What more helpless than a man-child newly born? What more vigorous and powerful than a great red dragon? Yet ultimately it is the Child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. The devil is set to frustrate if possible the purpose of God; and hence through the dragon he was prepared to devour the Child as soon as born.

The sign appeared in heaven before the gaze of John, but historically the thing signified took place at Bethlehem soon after our Lord was born. Divine action frustrated the dragon’s design. The action is described here as, “her Child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.” The life of our Lord, His death and resurrection are passed over in silence. There may also be here an allusion to Micah 5: 3, where Israel travails and brings forth Christ in a mystical sense—Christ at last recognized and acknowledged in the hearts of the remnant—only one could hardly speak of that being followed by the catching up to God and His throne, but rather by Christ seating Himself

on His own throne of glory. The design of Satan as the devourer of the Man-Child is defeated.

This being so, the dragon turns his attention to the woman, and in this the sign carries us on to things yet to come at the extreme end of the times of the Gentiles. The true Israel of God will not be called upon to resist the dragon but to flee to a place of no human resources where she will be under Divine protection and care for the stated period. Elijah, we may remember, fled into the wilderness to a place ordained of God, and later to Zarephath, and in both places was miraculously fed, and the time of trial for him lasted three and a half years. Now the 1,260 days of our verse is exactly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, according to Jewish reckoning. This same period appears again as "a time, and times, and half a time," in verse 14, and we have had it already in chapter 11, as 42 months as well as 1,260 days. It is doubtless the fateful latter half of Daniel's 70th week (see Dan. 9: 27).

We have had signs in heaven; now in verse 7 we have "war in heaven." To some it may be a strange thought that the heavens, in part at least, have been polluted by the presence and action of Satan, but the first chapter of Job should have prepared us for this. Then again, Daniel 10: 10—21, gives us a glimpse of angelic powers in the heavens acting both for and against saints of God on earth. In that passage we have mentioned, "Michael, one of the chief princes," spoken of elsewhere as the Archangel, and in Daniel 12: 1 he is spoken of as "the great prince which standeth for the children of

thy people." Here again, where the Israel of God are in question, Michael appears with his angels, and Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven to the earth. Their place in heaven is finally lost, as verse 8 indicates.

Verse 9 is very striking. The great dragon, though externally bearing marks which identify him with the Roman Empire, yet personally is Satan. This terrible spirit of evil, like so many human criminals, has several aliases: he is the devil, and also the old serpent of the Garden of Eden. He is also the deceiver of mankind, either directly or through his agents—in this book he is spoken of in this character seven times, the first occurrence being in this verse. In deception he is a practised hand. He deceives the whole world, and Matthew 27: 63 shows how effectively he did it with some of the most religious men the world has ever seen. He deceived them into regarding the One who was the truth as "that deceiver."

In Luke 10: 18, the Lord Jesus used the past tense, "I beheld," in announcing prophetically this great event, yet future; just as Daniel said, "I beheld till . . . the Ancient of days did sit," and other prophets spoke similarly, using the past tense in describing things to come. It is an event of far-reaching import, as verse 10 indicates. Heaven sees in it the presage of the complete establishment of the kingdom and power of Christ, and the complete overthrow of the adversary. Moreover it will bring to an end an evil work in which he delights at the present moment; that of accusing the saints before God, as also is illustrated in

the first chapter of Job. His work in this is incessant—day and night. Those whom he accused heaven acknowledge as “our brethren.” There is no need for saints to accuse each other before God. This is done most efficiently and incessantly by Satan.

But here certain “brethren” are specially in view. They overcame him and his accusations, firstly by the blood of the Lamb. In a judicial sense nothing but that could meet the accusations, as we all know right well. But secondly, on practical lines they overcame by adhering to the word of their testimony, even unto death. Like their Master, only in a lesser sense, their death was not their defeat but their victory.

The heavens rejoice at the ejection of the devil, but his fall means woe to the earth and the sea; that is, as we understand it, to men generally, whether in nations of comparative stability or in restless, unsettled communities. The devil will realize that since he could not maintain his footing in heaven, he will not be able to maintain it upon earth. His time is short and this stirs him up to great wrath, which, as he cannot vent it directly upon God, he will upon all that represents Him on earth. The godly remnant, symbolized by the woman, become the special object of his persecuting hatred.

Let us not fail to notice, and put together, the four characters in which the devil appears in this chapter—verses 4, 9, 10, 13. As regards Christ, he was the devourer: as regards the world, the deceiver: as regards the brethren, the accuser:

as regards saints in testimony on earth, the persecutor. Before he is dealt with in unsparing judgment his malign character is fully revealed.

His persecution of the woman is going to fail. That the woman had a place of refuge, prepared of God, was mentioned in verse 6: we now find that by means of an extraordinary sort she will be enabled to flee, as verse 14 indicates. The effort of the devil to hinder her is frustrated by more ordinary means, according to verse 16. It would appear from verse 17 that while the majority of the God-fearing will be thus miraculously protected, there will be others who do not flee and so are specially a target for his animosity. They are marked by obedience, and they have “the testimony of Jesus.” They are called to a special place of testimony, whilst the mass are to flee, as indeed the Lord Himself had indicated in Matthew 24: 15—21.

There can be no doubt, we think, that the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  year period, mentioned in several different ways in this passage, is the time of the great tribulation. It will be a time when the devil is excluded from heaven and consequently concentrating his wrath upon earth, and, as we shall see presently, the time when the vials of the wrath of God are poured out on the earth: a much more serious matter. It will also be the time when human lawlessness and iniquity rise to mountainous heights, and as a result the most fearful oppressions are instituted and wrongs are perpetrated. Chapter 13 now brings to our notice the two chief human instruments of Satan’s power, by

whom these evils are brought to pass.

John is now transported in his spirit to the sand of the sea, and out of the sea a wild beast arises. This beast has features which clearly connect him with the fourth beast seen in vision by Daniel, and described in his seventh chapter, and also with the red dragon we have just been considering. The symbolism is not obscure. Out of the restless, surging sea of nations the Roman Empire in its closing form will emerge. For the significance of the seven heads and the ten horns we may consult chapter 17: 8—13; a passage we must deal with later. It will suffice here to notice that in the case of the dragon the diadems are on the heads: in the case of the beast they are on the horns. The heads signify the varied forms which the ruling power has assumed through the years, and whatever they have been the devil has claimed to wear the diadem; and has, in fact, dominated the scene. When the Roman power reappears in the last days, it will be in a ten-kingdom form, and each king will claim a diadem under the beast.

Verse 2 indicates that this beast of the last days embraces within himself the characteristic features of the first three empires mentioned in Daniel 7. The Babylonian was like a lion: the Medo-Persian like a bear: the Grecian (or Macedonian) like a leopard. This beast had the features of all three. All their forms of beastly violence will be incorporated here, and even worse features of its own added. Here is blasphemy, a form of sin directed specially and definitely against God.

Moreover the power that is wielded is directly Satanic, for "power and his seat and great authority," was delegated by the dragon. Evidently, when the Roman dominion reappears it will be a distinctly Satanic production.

In these early verses we pass almost insensibly from the kingdom to the remarkable man in whom the dominion is to be headed up. When we read of one of the heads of the beast being wounded "as it were" to death, we think of it as figuring the empire. The deadly wound is healed in the surprising uprising of the beast energized by the devil; and now the beast figures the imposing individual, who will wield the power of the Empire in the last days. The word, "seat," in verse 2 is really "throne." Solomon, we may remember, inherited from David a throne that came from the hand of God, and there was added to him riches and power from the same hand. This individual will accept all from the hand of the devil.

Let us recollect also that Satan approached our Lord in the temptation in the wilderness with an offer of all the kingdoms of the world, if only He would worship him. The Lord's answer was, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." He utterly refused it. But the offer which the Lord in His perfection refused, will appeal to this man, who is called, "the beast," and he will do homage to the devil and get the kingdom for a brief spell. For that same brief spell Satan will be publicly acknowledged as "god," and thus seem to achieve what he has coveted from the beginning. We find a prophetic

reference to it in Isaiah 14: 12-14. "I will ascend . . . I will be like the Most High." Yet in result, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" The achievement of his darling desire is the prelude to his fall.

As the chief political agent of the dragon, the beast will be a very powerful and imposing personage; so much so that men will worship him, and regard his power as irresistible. Men will feel that here at last is the super-man and the super-kingdom, which can effectively impose its will and subdue all opposition. This it is, we judge, that will induce men to say, "Peace and safety," as foretold in 1 Thessalonians 5: 3, but which leads to "sudden destruction."

We have recently had striking and terrible proof of the superhuman influence and power that can be exerted by a man of the basest description, if he traffics with demons, as the late ruler of Germany did. In what we are considering not a mere demon is at work but Satan himself. In all the greatest crises that Scripture records it would appear that Satan employs no inferior agency but acts himself. This is so, for instance in the fall of man; in the temptation in the wilderness, when the Deliverer came forth; in encompassing the death of Christ through Judas Iscariot; and here, where the final bid is made to completely dominate the earth.

Inspired by Satan, the beast acts as Satan; his mouth is filled with promises and boastings on a great scale, coupled with blasphemy

against God and depreciation of everything divine. Not only the Name and dwelling of God but also those who have their dwelling or tabernacle in heaven, come under the lash of his tongue. Satan has just been cast out of heaven, and previously to that, saints have been caught up into heaven. They are therefore beyond Satan's power, but the more therefore the objects of his hate.

There will be saints still on earth and on these he will make war successfully. His rage is against everything of God. Those that dwell in heaven he can only speak against. Those on earth get different treatment. Some, represented by the woman in the previous chapter, flee and are protected from his animosity. Some are overcome, presumably by death. Some, represented by the two witnesses of chapter 12, have a special place of testimony, and are only overcome for a moment, and just before the end.

As to men generally, he completely captures their imagination. They will see in him all that they desire. Only the elect, whose names from the foundation of the world have been in the book of life of the slain Lamb, will fail to worship him. It will be a time of intense testing and patience, and faith will be tried to the uttermost.

And for ourselves, the revelation of these things is a test, and if we have not "ears to hear," we shall not profit. It is a revelation that runs counter to every thought of the natural man.

# ETERNAL LIFE.

J. McBROOM.

As to Israel—Daniel 12: 2; Psalm 133: 3; Isaiah 60: 4-15.

**L**IFE is that which in the nature of things is bound to cover every other item of blessing. Keeping this before us, let us see how it applies to the other companies which come into it, namely Israel, and then the nations blest from among the Gentiles. Israel is the first company set up on earth and stands in relation to the Assembly, which is the first company for heaven. In this way the heavens and earth are to be linked up in millennial glory in Christ and His Assembly as the heavenly city, from which flows that which will fill the earth with peace and gladness, the link of connection being between the glorified Assembly and Jerusalem, the royal city on earth. The blessing of eternal life has its own distinct meaning in each different company, and therefore we may expect to find a marked distinction between that class destined to fill the heavens and those for the earth, whether Jews or Gentiles. We shall be helped in this if we keep before us that life covers and includes within itself every other item of blessing whatever the class or dispensation may be.

What, then, is the superiority of the Jew? What is the profit of circumcision? Much every way. Firstly, to them were entrusted "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3: 2). What were these? They had "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law . . . and the promises (Rom. 9: 4). They were entrusted with all the affairs and interests of God in the earth. All was lost as we know

at the cross, but God, who is faithful to His word, is about to take them up, and by bringing them into life eternal will make them to rejoice in fullest and richest blessing.

Three passages in the Old Testament speak of this life. The first is in Psalm 21: 4 and refers to the Lord Jesus. He asked life in Gethsemane, and received it in resurrection. He who is life in personal glory took a place where He could ask it. The next is the raising up of Israel. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12: 2). This is the bringing in of the true Israel, which connects with what is said of the dry bones being made to live, in Ezekiel 37. The next passage is when it is said, Jehovah "commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psa. 133: 3). Here they are brought into blessing from which unity will flow among themselves and richest praises to Jehovah and their glorious Messiah, Son of David. In virtue of this, and in the very nature of things, their spiritual constitution will be different. Their apprehension will be different and, while they will be filled to fullest capacity with thankfulness, joy and praise, their position will be in flesh and blood and will differ from the Assembly as greatly as the earth differs from the heavens. With the nations that are blest they shall be in a kingdom set up from the beginning or foundation of the earth, while the Assembly is the vessel of eternal counsel. It is well to be clear

here, for neither of them as a company will apprehend the power of the Lord nor the Cross, as it is given to the Assembly to know them.

It will be recalled that on the day of atonement expiation was made for two representative classes; for Aaron and his family and then the nation as such. For the former, which represented in type the Assembly, the sin offering was a bullock; for the nation, it was two goats. The bullock typifies an apprehension of the work of Christ by the saints of today as that which has removed sin, and not only sins; while the goat that was slain sets forth an apprehension of the Cross by which sins are put away and man is set up in blessing on the earth in flesh and blood, the people rejoicing in the Lord. Have we today an apprehension of the Cross, by which the whole sin question is dealt with once and for ever in such a way as this, while man's sin is still rising in its most active forms? Yes. We know that the Victim is now Victor, and we are linked up with Him on the other side of death in a holy relationship outside of nature and flesh and blood, in the holy circle of love with the Father and the Son. If so, we can understand something of the difference between Israel's calling and that of the church.

They will then enjoy the New Covenant. "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 teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will for-

give their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31: 33, 34). This is something of the blessing; sins forgiven, the law written in the heart and Jehovah known from the least to the greatest. They will know the meaning of things in a way never before known: the adoption, the glory and the covenants, and, above all, the service of the Sanctuary.

If we turn for a moment to some of the texts that speak of this we shall find a wealth of language that cannot be equalled outside Holy Scripture, and that in a mutual way take in both Jehovah, Messiah and the people. "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged: because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee . . . Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far; their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee . . . Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee. I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations" (Isa. 60: 4-15). The language is unsurpassed for beauty and the whole chapter should be

read. But let us note further that this people is told to take with them words and return to Jehovah. Those words they will get from such scriptures as Psalm 51 and Isaiah 53, words of confession, drawn from them when they have looked upon Him whom they pierced, as predicted in Zechariah 12: 10. But after repentance and mourning their sorrow shall be turned to joy, and the stammering tongues shall be loosed to sing His praises, and not only this, but they will invite the peoples of the earth to join with them in praise to their great Jehovah, as we see in Psalm 100: 1. For,

“ Israel’s race shall now behold Him,  
 Full of grace and majesty;  
 Though they set at nought and sold  
 Him,  
 Pierced and nailed Him to a tree;  
 Now in glory  
 Shall their great Messiah see.”

But now notice the joyful expressions of them that stand by; such as, “ Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called, ‘ My delight is in her,’ and thy land ‘ Married,’ for the Lord delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married ” (Isaiah 62: 3, 4). But we see what she says of herself at this time when betrothed to Jehovah. “ She shall sing there as in the days of her youth ” (Hosea 2: 15). The earth shall then bring forth abundance and every man sits “ under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid ” (Micah 4: 4). “ We will walk,” say they, “ in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.” And then the happy response

goes on, “ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments [the priestly turban] and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels ” (Isaiah 61: 10). We might greatly add to this by citing Psalm 45, where she is seen all glorious within the palace chambers as a queen in her divinely given beauty, and add still further the felicitous language of the Song of Songs; but surely we can see in all this what eternal life will mean for the nation, beloved for the fathers’ sake. They will then indeed have the adoption, covenants, promises and service of Jehovah, and pride and selfishness being taken away, they will invite the long despised Gentiles to join them in praising the Lord. Let Psalms 95 to 100 be read here.

While life, as has been said, is difficult, if not impossible to define, it may thus be seen in its blessings and activities. All blessing in the heart of the Godhead is to be found now in Christ; He has been made to be blessings for ever. We might go through the New Testament and find many items of blessing for the creature, subsisting in Him; so of Israel it is said, “ I bring near My righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory ” (Isaiah 46: 13). The Assembly is His Body and Bride, and Israel is His glory. By a national yet spiritual resurrection, Israel comes into salvation and righteousness, forgiveness, the knowledge of the Lord and the law

written in the heart. She is then made fit to take the place of Queen as the royal consort of the King in His glory, as Psalm 45 indicates. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart (Song of Solomon 3: 11).

Israel is indeed "the beloved of

the Lord that shall dwell in safety by Him" in the day of His gladness. They too shall be glad in the Lord and rejoice, and shout for joy all those that are upright in heart. In that way we can see Zion as the city of Jehovah's choice, singing her sweetest songs. Like Job they have passed their days of schooling and discipline, and now it can be said, There the Lord commanded the blessing—LIFE FOR EVERMORE.

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## Holiness and Righteousness.

Though these attributes of God seem to bear much the same meaning, yet there is a difference between them. Holiness refers to God's house, His people, and their service before Him as worshippers. Holiness becomes His house for ever (Psalm 93: 5). To His people, He says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1: 16). As to their worship, it is to be in the beauty of holiness.

These scriptures show what holiness has to say to those who are **near to Him**. It is really a question of **like God, like people**. When God's presence is contemplated, in respect of a relationship He has made with His people, holiness is the unchanging character in which He is, and in which they must be. This holiness we have in Christ.

Righteousness refers to His throne and government. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom" (Heb. 1: 8). Again it is written, "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man [Christ] whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17: 31). Other scriptures could be added, to show that His righteousness refers **especially** to His throne and government.

In John 17 we find the Lord saying "**holy Father**," in reference to His own (see verse 11), and "**righteous Father**," in reference to the world (verse 25).

J.H.

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When one suffers greatly at the hand of someone they are tempted to think **only** of the rod, and to overlook the **Hand** that **holds** the rod.

It is not the common stones that are cut and polished. God takes trouble in preparing us for His own use and glory.

It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little.

# BLESSING : FREEDOM : ORDER.

D. CHISHOLM

A meditation on Psalm 72.

A WIDE scope of glory and blessing is indicated by the history of the three Old Testament kings which prefigure the Lord's millennial reign of one thousand years. These three kings, Melchisedec, David and Solomon, are generally understood as speaking to Israelites and their land of promised **blessing, freedom and order**: three conditions which will subsist together when the Jewish nation is again reinstated in divine favour. Melchisedec's priestly service looks on to a sphere of blessing upheld by the Son of God; whereas in royal character He comes as Man of war, establishing the Kingdom and setting His subjects free. This is Davidic in character; then will follow an age of true order and peace, of which Solomon's reign is but a faint picture.

To bring about this state of bliss on behalf of His earthly people, God's purposes require that the Jews, scattered for centuries amongst the nations of the earth, shall return to their land. An emigration of Jews from Europe is present-day politics of the first order and of world-wide interest, though it cannot be said when this will be brought about. The fulfilling of prophetic events will begin, however, **after** such a return has taken place, which will at first be in unbelief.

In the light of this, the setting of our Psalm is interesting. David's reign is about over, his young son Solomon will succeed him on the throne, prosperity is to follow, but the prophetic disclosures here go

beyond Solomon's time, describing in a natural and simple manner the wonders of Messiah's reign. Though prophetic in their description, the glowing beauty of these predictions stirs feelings of devotion and admiration in the heart, and indeed prophecy seen in its true light ought always to affect the reader in this way.

The opening words of the Psalm imply that the Kingdom will not be brought about by human ingenuity or by the preaching of the gospel. We read of judgment; this is how He comes to assert His claims and insist upon the crown rights which are His, both by divine and human relationships. In the exercise of such judgment, there is the application of mercy to those who have afflicted themselves, as they wait for the Deliverer.

The fundamental principle of the Kingdom is righteousness, because of who He is, and all under Him are constituted righteous also. Thus what is right according to God gives assurance of blessing; for the representative authority, that is, the established power, as symbolized in the "mountains," will, we are told, "bring peace to the people." In our present day God uses His servants in grace for the good of others: in that day He will use His servants in the righteous administration of the Kingdom. Consequently there will be no favour shown as between man and man, the joy of salvation and all that this means will be the portion of the needy, and, while sin

will be the exception, the oppressor will be instantly dealt with. This state of bliss and reverential fear is permanent and will endure as the moon, and God's goodness is reflected in the prosperity which will be enjoyed throughout all generations.

The throne of the Eternal, described in Revelation 4, bears the aspect of judgment, but the presence of the rainbow round about it, is the symbol and assurance that in judgment God will remember mercy. Similarly when the scythe, as seen in God's governmental dealings, has removed iniquity from Jacob, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass," a very sweet expression of His tender dealings with His people of that day.

The Kingdom, being divine, is set up in righteousness; all entering it will be born again, and if the population is small to begin with, death will be a rare occurrence and long life the rule. In such conditions, therefore, the people will flourish. God's purposes will be fulfilled exactly as given, none will ever fail and in this connection the Messiah will have dominion, according to Genesis 15: 18; the Kingdom thus covering an area two and a half times greater than that covered by the entire British Isles. Beyond the present environs of Palestine the King's beneficial sway will immediately be felt and the wilderness and barren places, for long harbouring a mixed people, will undergo changes both morally and physically, while the more distant isles pay due homage in acknowledging His ability to rule in equity. Thus the readiness of royalty to come under

His sceptre, for "all kings shall fall down before Him," reminding us of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon and the rich reward that was hers. National strife, jealousies and suspicions will have disappeared; the gates will not be closed at night and the nations will speak peace one to another.

There are sweet characteristics of the Lord's life, seen in the gospels, which will be always true, for amidst such national dignities and grandeur the lesser requirements of the poor will not escape His kindly eye, and the needs of body and soul will be more than supplied. The designation "poor" here would simply refer to the humble and devout who became His happy subjects. Perhaps the main features of redeeming grace in that day, and especially in the Psalmist's meditations, speak to Israel of what men will find in Himself as a mighty **Preserver, keeping deceit and violence entirely outside His Kingdom.**

The Spirit of God in Isaiah 2: 4 has foretold that instruments of war will be turned to a very useful purpose, implements suitable to the cultivation of field and orchard. This in itself will be blest, there will be no food problems, and other questions too, which have perplexed men, will be satisfactorily settled, and the way He will do this will show Him as a **Provider.**

It was never supposed that God's people should remain satisfied with their blessings, now or in the future. In this psalm as David's meditations come to a close he is taken up with the **Blesser Himself.** Thus the re-

sponse, as seen in the praise of all the earth, led in the first instance by Israel, and shared by all the nations, is toward Him who alone doeth wondrous things.

Others have promised great things throughout the ages and have failed, but all He said He would do, He will have done, and this for His own glory and man's blessing. The Psalm ends in worship, the whole

earth is filled with His glory, and the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended; that is, he has nothing more for which to ask.

Needless to say, the Church will have previously entered the Father's house, as promised in John 14, enjoying the heavenly side of blessing, a portion beyond comparison with that with which Millennial saints are blessed on earth.

## "LOVE . . . MORE AND MORE."

A. F. POLLOCK

THE most wonderful message that has ever fallen on human ears is that of the great love of God to sinful man in giving His only begotten Son. The story is unfolded by the Apostle John, and then, as moved by the Spirit of God, he exclaims, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4: 19). In these few words we at once see that when the great message of the gospel is believed and pardon received, man's love is won for God.

As believers we can with gladness join heartily with the apostle in saying, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" and we have no doubt whatever about it, but most of us would like to be conscious of greater fervour on our part, when we say, "We love Him." Indeed a verse of a well-known hymn aptly describes what we feel:—

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,  
That my love is weak and faint;  
Yet I love Thee and adore,  
Oh! for grace to love Thee more."

If then we confess with some shame to the poor response we make to the love of God, let us be sufficiently sincere and earnest to seek the causes of what is, sad to say, all too prevalent among Christians in these days, resulting in lack of power and usefulness in witness for the Lord, and lack of love to one another, instead of being like the Thessalonians, who were "taught of God to love one another . . . more and more" (1 Thess. 4: 9, 10).

It is plain that the **source** of love is not in us, but in God Himself, and we love God only in the measure that we have taken in His love to us. For we read, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is also the word, "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth" (Jas. 1: 18). This makes it abundantly clear that, but for God's sovereign love and grace towards us, we would have remained "dead in trespasses and sins." Oh, the wonder of the

love of God! This is the way love to God begins, but why is love with us not more fervent?

For answer, let us listen to the words of the Lord in His conversation with the Pharisee, who had invited Him to his house as recorded in Luke 7, but who received Him without showing the courtesies ordinarily shown to a welcome guest. As they sat at meat together, a woman of the city came in, and, overcome with feelings of gratitude and love, wept at the Saviour's feet, broke an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and anointed His feet.

Presently, turning to His host, Jesus told him of "a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, **Thou hast rightly judged.**"

Here our Lord and Master shows that it is in the measure we realize the greatness of the debt that we have been forgiven, that our hearts will be filled with gratitude and we shall love Him. But, then, so many of us have so small a sense of sin and its consequences, as unfitting us for the holy presence of God. It is certainly a matter for real heart-searching. For it is very plain that unless we have a lively sense of the greatness of the debt which we have been forgiven, our love will lack fervency.

The call to repentance is not heard as it ought to be in these days, or indeed as it was preached in the days that are past, and the words

spoken through Jeremiah may well describe all too many of the preachers of the present day, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace: when there is no peace."

Yes, it seems plain that one great cause of the trouble is that the sense of sin is small and consequently repentance has been shallow, producing a very feeble form of Christianity, and preachers will do well to show men "that they should repent and turn to God," as Paul did. Yet, if preachers have only experienced a shallow repentance themselves, how can they preach it in power?

Let us, nevertheless, face the fact that this is what is needed, and that love with us will be small if our thoughts of what we have been forgiven are small, for Christ said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Does someone exclaim, Then must I be a great sinner if I am to have much love for the Lord?—But such a question indicates that the questioner is comparing himself with his neighbour and not measuring himself by the holiness of God nor taking into account the cost of his redemption. Our blessed Lord had to go through the pangs of Calvary and the horrors of being forsaken of God when our sins were laid upon Him. We must see our sin in the light of the greatness of the ransom, paid in agony and blood by our great Redeemer. In that light minor differences disappear.

The Dead Sea is some 1,300 feet below sea level. Mount Everest is 29,140 feet above. But the sun is 92,900,000 miles away from the earth, and when we think of this.

we do not consider which is the further from the sun because we realize that the difference is not worth talking about. If we see ourselves in the unsullied light of the holiness of God, like Job, who was one of the most upright of men, we shall exclaim, " Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

Above all we must apprehend aright the cost to God and to our Saviour of our redemption. For this we must be ready to stand in thought at the foot of the central cross on Golgotha's hill outside the gates of the City of Jerusalem over 1,900 years ago, and there gaze upon the Son of God crucified for the world's sin—yes, but for **our** personal sins. And as in thought you stand there, do not hurry away, but pause and say to yourself, He died there for **me**. Then confess, " **My** sin was so great that such a sacrifice on the part of **my** Saviour was required to pay the penalty of **my** guilt." The prophecy was being fulfilled, " He was numbered with the transgressors," and " The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Yes, He was forsaken, that I might never be forsaken in the outer darkness because of **my** sins—it was for **me**.

Then, will not gratitude and love so fill our souls that from our hearts will rise the fervent prayer,

" Lord, take my heart and let it be  
For ever closed to all but Thee." for,

" Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Let us now see how fervent love grows, manifests itself, and has its grand reward. We shall only learn this at the Master's feet and if we

are really set on being Christ's disciples indeed. Let us, then, in thought join the disciples in the upper room at Jerusalem and with them listen to the last loving words of our Saviour, ere He goes forward to the cross, there to give Himself in atonement for sin and to prove His love for His own to the full. His words are recorded by the Apostle John, who in the gospel under his name, refers to himself as " the disciple whom Jesus loved."

We catch the tender tones of His voice as He talks with His loved ones about their love to Him: after all, it is what He thinks about it that really matters. " If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Then further, " He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

These words make it very plain that our love is seen only in the measure that we keep His commandments, and if we are careless of His commandments it is a sure sign of our lack of love for Him. And how great the recompense for him whose love is manifested by loving obedience. Here, then, we see the way that love is fostered and developed.

Does someone ask why the keeping of Christ's **commandments** is urged, when Scripture affirms that we are not under the law but under grace? Do we call our blessed Saviour, Lord? If so, and we mean it, then we shall look for His directions and be eager to know what His will for us is, that we may do it. We have Christ's own words, " Ye are

My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." From this, then, we see that love, if real and not in word only, delights to obey such a Master, and if we obey **because of love**, then it is **grace** and not law that controls us.

Have we not all experienced that it is in the measure we have interested ourselves in others for the Lord's sake, and out of fervent love to Him, that we have experienced the joy of the Lord; whereas when we have allowed our interest to flag and have become self-centred our joy and fervour of spirit have declined and we have missed the sense of the Lord manifesting Himself to us, as He promised to those who have and keep His commandments.

Good indeed will it be if love to the Lord leads us to this experience, yet love with us may grow even still more, and then we shall not only make ourselves acquainted with our Lord's commandments and keep them, but we will diligently seek to find in the Scriptures what is the mind of Christ, learning what are the things that please Him and what He would have us do, even though no definite command is expressed. Thus we may learn the mind of Christ and instinctively know how to act in whatever circumstances we may be placed in this life.

And so as we listen further to the Lord talking to His disciples in the upper room, we hear Him saying, "If a man love Me he will keep My word: and My Father will love him and We will come unto him and make our abode with him." Surely this means full communion with the Father and the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, such as is not

enjoyed by those who have not loved Him enough to become acquainted with His mind, by searching and meditating on His Word and keeping it.

In commercial life a man may take his young son into his business, wondering how he will conduct himself. To his satisfaction and pleasure the young fellow quickly begins to show interest in the work, constantly going to his father to receive his instructions: what he is to do, and how he wishes it to be done. As the months roll by he manifests increasing keenness to learn his father's mind, and eagerness to further the business accordingly. The relations between them become more and more intimate and harmonious until the son has so fully got to know his father's mind that he can be trusted to attend to the business just as the father himself would. He not only observes the commandments, but carries out the word.

Let us respond then to the word of the Psalmist, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." And let the word through Jude be ever what we have before us; "Keep yourselves in the love of God," remembering that it is the love of God that awakens and strengthens our love, and that there is no measure to His love, hence our love should ever grow more and more. Then let us not forget that we can only practise love as we manifest the grace of God to others and care for the interests of Christ in this world as we await His return.

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ."

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTERS 13: 11—14: 20)

**A**NOTHER beast now engages the attention of John, the seer. If the first holds a dominating position in the government of the world, the second is equally dominating in the sphere of religion. The government of God in relation to the earth is largely the theme of the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament unfolds the grace of God in Christ and brings heaven within our view. The devil will introduce his counterfeits, acting in both directions, and when men are brought under the power of both his grip upon them will be complete. They will be held by "totalitarianism" as in a vice. Our chapter predicts this, long before the word "totalitarian" had been coined.

The second beast rises not from the sea, but from the earth; that is, from a settled state of things. The rise of the first beast will have quelled the surging sea of nations, and prepared his way. He impersonates a lamb, but his true character is revealed by his speech. Jesus came as **THE LAMB** of God, as John 1 shows, and chapter 10 of the same gospel shows that as the true Shepherd of the sheep He was recognised by His voice. Here the false "lamb" proves himself to be no true shepherd but a slave-driver, speaking with the voice of the dragon.

Tyrannous power marks him, power derived through, and exercised in favour of, the first beast, who supports him. This interplay of forces has always been sought through the centuries by the civil

rulers on the one hand and the religious leaders on the other—particularly by the Roman hierarchy. It will be attained in very full measure at the end of the age. We do not forget that there will be the apostate "church," symbolized by the harlot in chapter 17, but this is to be destroyed by the ten kings under the first beast, whereas the second beast continues to the end and meets his doom together with the first beast. He is supported by the worldly power of the first beast, whom he supports religiously by displays of supernatural power, even to the extent of bringing fire down from heaven, thus claiming Heaven's approval.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, we read of the coming lawless one, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Here John sees him deceiving the nations, and particularly "them that dwell on the earth." These earth-dwellers will doubtless feel that their dreams are to be realized in these "super-men;" that here at last has been organized the ideal condition of things, wherein great **MAN** may display himself in all his glory. It will be the apotheosis of Humanism; that is, of religion which finds its centre in man and not in God. Hence the suggestion to set up some great image of the super-man will be a very natural one.

It is remarkable that at the beginning of the times of the Gentiles,

Nebuchadnezzar, the first head, arrogated to himself almost divine honours and made a great image, the worship of which was to institute a kind of super-religion, thus unifying the diverse religions that prevailed in his wide dominions. Thus he glorified himself; but he was defied by a mere handful of godly Jews, defeated when he attempted to exterminate them, and soon after was debased below the level of the beasts and made to appear one of the greatest fools that ever crawled on the earth, by the mighty hand of God upon him. He learned a salutary lesson, as the end of Daniel 4 shows. Our chapter is showing us that the times of the Gentiles will end just as they began and with apparently greater success, for those who refuse to worship the image of the beast will be killed. This time God will not intervene to frustrate the intentions of these wicked men as He once did with Nebuchadnezzar. Their judgment will fall on them in one overwhelming blow at the finish, as we see in chapter 19.

The lying wonders performed are evidently Satanic in origin, and their effect is to subjugate the minds of men and make them completely subservient to the designs of the devil. The system instituted being totalitarian, its tentacles are spread over matters of a commercial nature as well as religious. Every man will have to bear a mark. Just as the ancient slave-owners used to brand their slaves, so men will carry a mark which will brand them as slaves of the devil through the puppets of his creation. The brand employed will apparently have three forms; either "the mark," whatever that may exactly mean, or

"the name of the beast," or, "the number of his name."

As to the last we are informed that it is 666. Verse 18 has intrigued many minds and led to much speculation as to its significance; and hitherto all to no purpose. Nearly sixty years have passed since we ourselves first heard confident solutions put forth, all to be falsified by subsequent events, as many since have been. We believe that when the time arrives, and those who fear God need a distinguishing mark, this point will be illuminated by the Spirit of God and so all will be clear. For us let it suffice that just as seven is the number of completeness and perfection, so six is the number of human incompleteness and imperfection. It is significant that six is a number stamped upon the Philistine giants—see, 1 Samuel 17: 4-7; 2 Samuel 21: 20. Goliath's height was six cubits and a span; six pieces of his armour are specified; his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels. His brother had six fingers on each hand, six toes on each foot. Yet the giants fell like ninepins before David and his warriors. The imposing beast, whose number is six thrice over, will similarly fall before the presence of the Lord.

With steady gaze John had observed the scenes unrolling before him. He had looked at the sea and seen a beast rise therefrom; then at the earth and seen a second beast arise. But now chapter 14 opens and his gaze is directed to Mount Zion, and there he sees the Lamb, whom he had previously seen in chapter 5. What a delightful change! No longer is it a beast of grotesque and frightful appearance, or a pseudo-lamb that is a dragon at heart, but

the true Lamb, who is indeed the Son of the Father, and He stands on Mount Zion, which is symbolic of that royal grace which is the only hope for any man. That being so, we are permitted to see others associated with Him.

Chapter 14 gives us a series of visions, all of which set before us in various ways God's thoughts and actions from heaven during the period when the two beasts are dominating the earth, persecuting and even slaying the saints. In the first of these visions we see how God will preserve for Himself faithful souls who will be true to the Lamb and free from the corruptions that the beast is enforcing on all under his power. The number given is symbolic. Twelve is the number of complete administration, and here we have the square of it multiplied by a thousand. We have had it before in the number sealed of the tribes of Israel in chapter 7, but we must not infer from this that the two companies are identical. There it was a question of securing the elect of Israel before the judgments were permitted to burst forth. Here we have a company redeemed from among men as firstfruits for the millennial earth, who have been preserved in virginal purity, and who have "His name and the name of His Father"—as it should read—written on their foreheads, instead of the name or mark of the beast. As a result of their unique experiences they sing a new song which is peculiarly their own. The tried saint of today may well take courage from the fact that, if special trials are endured with God, we are thereby qualified to sound His praise in a special song. When the heavens

and the earth join in the great orchestra of praise in the millennial age, what a variety of tone and utterance there will be! Yet all will be in harmony.

The better attested reading in verse 5 is, "and in their mouths was no lie found; for they are blameless." The propaganda of the two beasts of chapter 13 was one huge lie, just as Paul indicated in 2 Thessalonians 2. The miracles wrought by the beast he characterizes as "lying wonders," and he tells us that God will send men a strong delusion "that they should believe a lie." These saints were wholly separate from all this. They were true followers of their Master, who would not take up the names of evil into His lips, as Psalm 16 prophetically puts it. Hence they were without blame in a course of practical righteousness. The words, "before the throne of God," lack authority; so it is evidently not the point that they were judicially righteous by the blood of the Lamb, but practically right in their course below.

The second vision of the chapter is in verses 6 and 7. In that very dark hour in earth's story there will be rendered to all men everywhere a clear testimony to God in His creatorial greatness, which demands that He be feared and glorified, especially in view of the fact that the hour of His judgment is come. Two things may be noticed. First, it is called, "the **everlasting** gospel . . . unto them that dwell on the earth." The presentation of God in the glory of creation is always "glad tidings," no matter what the age or dispensation. We have lived to a day when the earth-dwellers have been grievously deceived by

the devil's lie of evolution, so we can appreciate how glad is the tidings of a Creator-God. The word "everlasting" may also carry back our thoughts to the "everlasting covenant" of Genesis 9: 16.

Second, this gospel is committed to **an angel**, flying in the midst of heaven. We often say, rightly enough, that no angel can preach the gospel which speaks of the redeeming blood of Christ, inasmuch as no angel has any experimental knowledge of redemption. But when creation is in question angels can speak in a way that men cannot. Angels saw its wonders and shouted for joy. Men only know of it by revelation. By angelic ministraton this testimony will be diffused through the earth in that solemn hour.

Verse 8 gives us a third vision, of a second angel. The fall of Babylon is briefly announced; full details of which are given to us in chapters 17 and 18. The wording of our verse suggests first a city and then a corrupt woman, just as we find Babylon portrayed in those chapters. It clearly symbolizes the corrupt ecclesiastical system, headed up in the papacy, which will rise to great heights of splendour and influence after the true church is gone, and which will for a brief moment dominate and seduce all the nations. So in the second vision we have the proclamation of the true Creator-God, just when men are deifying a man in the person of the beast; in the third vision the judgment of the false religious system, which was aiding and abetting this evil.

appears—verses 9-13. On God's behalf he utters the sternest possible warning of the judgment that will fall on all who accept the mark of the beast and worship him. It will indeed be a solemn hour when men have to face such alternatives. If they do not worship the beast death is the penalty before them, as we saw in chapter 13: 15. If they do, the far more awful penalty will certainly come upon them, as verses 10 and 11 of our chapter state. If we were asked what two verses in the whole Bible present us with the darkest and most terrible picture, we should select these. We may well ask, Why language of such tremendous intensity here?

The answer we believe to be, that here we have the climax of all the preceding ages. Mankind started on its fallen and lawless career fascinated by the lie of the devil, "Ye shall be as gods" (Gen. 3: 5). Under the same evil leadership and through the two beasts, mankind will make its supreme and last bid to reach the goal of its desire. At this point then human sin reaches its climax and rises to its highest expression. Is it not fitting that the most bitter judgment is to fall on the highest sin? Testimony to the eternity of punishment is quite uniform throughout the New Testament, but at the same time the Lord's own words — Luke 12: 47, 48, for instance—have indicated that with God, as with men, there are degrees in the severity of judgment. Here, then, we have eternal judgment of the utmost severity which will lie on those who will have carried sin to its most outrageous lengths; the very reading of which fills the soul with horror. Those who fall under

In the fourth vision a third angel

it will have "no rest," and they will stand as an eternal witness to the severity of God's judgment against sin. The "smoke of their torment" will be something for every eye to see.

Verses 12 and 13 speak of the saints who will not bow to the beast. It will be a supreme test of patience and endurance. When men generally are being forced to comply with the demands and commandments of the beasts, these will keep the commandments of God; and this they will do because they cling to "the faith of Jesus." They may not know Him in that full way, which is the portion of the Christian today, but they will know that Jesus, who once came and was despised and rejected, is the true Christ of God, and the faith of this will possess them in spite of everything, and they will brave the wrath of the devil.

Some of them will escape his power, but many of them will fall as victims before the beasts, and a peculiar blessedness is the portion of such. The beast-worshippers will pass out of this life into eternal damnation of special intensity—out of apparent glory into the torment. Saints with the faith of Jesus may be martyred in circumstances of utmost distress and apparent defeat, but "henceforth," from that very moment, their blessedness begins. Great emphasis is added to this by the way the whole Godhead is introduced here. These saints keep the commandments of **God**; also the faith of **Jesus**; they die in the **Lord**; that is, because owning His authority; the **Spirit** endorses their blessedness. We have just seen that the damned have no rest, but these "rest from their labours; and their

works do follow them" into the eternal world, that they may receive their due reward.

The chapter closes with a vision which comprises two sections—the reaping of the harvest, and the gathering in of the vine of the earth. John beheld a white cloud. The cloud indicated the presence of God: its whiteness, the pure and spotless character of the judgment which the presence of God must now involve. One like the Son of Man sat **on** that cloud—not **in** it, as though concealed by it, but fully manifested—crowned and with the sickle of judgment in His hand. All judgment is committed to the Son of Man, as we know. He acts mediatorially, and therefore thrusts in His sickle when the word of direction reaches Him from the inner shrine through an angel, and the earth is reaped.

The figure of a harvest is used in connection with judgment in both Old and New Testaments—Joel 3: 13; Matthew 13: 38—43. It is more particularly a figure of discriminatory judgment, as Matthew shows. The wheat will be reaped as well as the tares. In the final result there is the shining forth as the sun for these, and the furnace of fire for those.

But another angel comes forth; this time not from the sanctuary but from the altar where the fire of judgment burned, and over that fire he had power. The instruction now is to cut down the clusters of the vine of the earth, which were fully ripe. The grapes were gathered and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. This indicates overwhelming judgment falling upon that which is so wholly evil that no discrimination is necessary. It is

remarkable that Joel 3: 13, which predicts the harvest, also predicts the winepress judgment. It is of this terrible moment that Isaiah 63: 1-6 speaks also. It is, "the day of vengeance," according to verse 4 of that passage, but also, "the year of My redeemed," inasmuch as the total crushing of the adversaries will mean a final redemption of the godly, just as it happened when Israel was redeemed at the Red Sea and the Egyptians crushed. It is "the day of vengeance of our God," the words which the Lord **did NOT read** in the synagogue at Nazareth.

The last verse of our chapter gives

us in symbolic language an idea of the devastating and widespread effect of this judgment. Jerusalem is, of course, indicated by "the city," and 1,600 furlongs is about the whole length of Palestine. There will be a complete and crushing sweeping away of all the adversaries who will at that time gather themselves together against God—see again Joel 3: 9-16.

The Lord Jesus is not treading the winepress today, nor is He reaping the harvest of **the earth**. He is sowing the seed through His servants, and fruit therefrom is being reaped. But it is **for heaven**, and not earth.

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## "The Tender Herb."

(Deut. 32: 2).

I think we cannot be too simple, nor too plain, nor set out the precious things of God in too clear a light. The little ones of God have very great needs, and must have our special care. These tender herbs are very apt to be dried up; and yet, being tender, they are not able to drink in a great shower all at once. When I have been travelling, especially in Southern France and Italy, I have come upon places where the river has burst its banks, and covered all the land with water: then, instead of blessing the fields, it has swept everything out of them, and buried them in mud, and killed the crops. There is a great difference between irrigation and inundation; and some preachers forget this. A sermon may sometimes act in that fashion to some of God's dear tender ones; it may be a perfect deluge of doctrine, sweeping up by the roots those feeble plants which are not very deeply rooted in the faith. They shall not perish, but we must avoid everything which has a tendency to destroy even the least of them. We do well to give the tender herbs the water of life little by little. C.H.S.

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"I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die"

(GENESIS 19: 19).

Seen from outside, the path of faith appears very painful; it is, for everyone who walks in it, full of sweetness and peace. The mountains, on which God communed with Abraham and Abraham with God, were the object of terror to Lot. He thought he would perish there.

# CHRIST, THE POWER OF GOD.

R. HARKNESS

(1 Corinthians 1: 23, 24; Ephesians 1: 15—23)

**“POWER** belongeth unto God,” wrote the Psalmist of old, and the whole Word of God bears out that statement. Even the vaunted power of man, in which he boasts, lies in the hand of God. In Proverbs we read, “the king’s heart is in the hands of the Lord.” Daniel, even when his own fate seemed to hang in the balance and turned upon the will or whim of an earthly monarch, said of God that, “He removeth kings and setteth up kings.” Jeremiah spoke to the people of his day the word of God in this way, “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.” He pointed out how God was King and gave the lands of Israel into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as His shepherd. God could use that heathen king and all his power for His purpose.

We Christians can feel that behind the rise and fall of empires, behind all these whims and currents of the affairs of men, the hand of God moves in power. The power of man is in the hand of God and never at any time has God entrusted universal power to one man. How many times there have been attempts on the part of great conquerors to gain universal power, but always their efforts have been thwarted. God never has permitted that. We know that God has His Man, the One to

whom He has committed universal power, that One who is called the power of God, and who was here upon earth and so pleased God that He could open the heavens and say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

Not only has God given Him power; God has given Him authority. Someone may obtain power and yet not have the authority to wield it, but our Lord has both authority and power, in heaven and in earth. How freely and gladly each one of us would say, He is worthy; worthy as the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, as well as honour and glory and blessing.

He has the first place in all God’s creation, but I wonder if each one of us here has shown that we do consider Him trustworthy, by giving Him the place of supremacy in that little universe of our own hearts and lives? After the Sunday meetings what about Monday and all the other days of the week? Are we giving Him first place in our hearts, in our lives day by day? “Sanctify Christ as Lord in you hearts.” Has each one of us done that deliberately? Every true servant of God has had a deep sense of personal indebtedness to the Lord Jesus Christ, and has given Him that place. What a wonderful thing to be linked to Him as born again and possessing His Spirit. That wonderful power of His can then become ours—spiritual power.

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This article and the five which follow it are condensed reports of addresses given to young believers meeting at St. Andrew’s Scotland, in June last. They are placed in the order in which given.—EDITOR.

I suppose the maintenance of spiritual power is one of the supreme questions of the Christian life. It is one reason why we have a meeting such as this, when we get together and renew our spiritual power, and how deeply we feel the need of it. Some Christians have tried to find ways and means of working up spiritual power. We have all sorts of experiences talked about. Perhaps one might call them attempted short cuts to spiritual power, yet how often there is a sad leakage and these experiences lead to disappointment.

How is spiritual power to be maintained? The Lord Jesus, who wields all power does not deal it out first to one and then to another, but brings it into our lives as He dwells in our hearts by faith, and controls us by His Spirit. Then Christ, the power of God, becomes power in man. The only way to maintain spiritual power is by communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, thus maintaining a link with the hidden, unseen world so that He, by His enduring presence, might use us for his purpose. There is no short cut to God. If we come to a meeting such as this simply to listen and go away again, in a short time everything will be dissipated and nothing vital wrought in our lives. If we go away determined by grace to maintain that link with God, so that in the midst of this busy life we keep that place of communion sacred, then the blessing we receive here can be maintained.

I appeal to the young people to practice the habit of having a time of quietness. Spiritual life can be sustained in no other way. In our busy modern life it is hard to find

time but day by day let us draw aside for communion with God. In the quiet time two essential things are prayer and the reading of God's Word.

In prayer there is a place for worship, thanksgiving, petition. A wonderful power is prayer not only in our lives but in the lives of others. Don't think the missionary has plenty of time to pray. Our day starts at 5-45 a.m. and as the day runs its course there is plenty to fill it up. Let us be thoughtful in the place of prayer. We cannot rush into the Lord's presence and expect to hear His voice speak to us in a moment and then rush out again. There must be prayer, persistent, regular prayer.

Secondly, there is the need for Bible reading and the application of it to our lives. If the Bible is not being applied to our daily living, to the ordinary common round and daily task, in our place of business and in our home, of what value is it all? When the ordinary affairs of life tend to divert us, the Word of God is there continually to remind us and bring us back.

In one way the Christian life is a life of peace, but in another sense it is a battle, a strife, a fight for truth and righteousness and purity and holiness. It is going to demand all we have if we want really to live for God, and surely you young folks have a desire for that, and to let the Lord Jesus Christ have His rightful place in your minds and hearts. We Christians should be content to miss some of the so-called "plums" in this world in order that He may have His place in our hearts

and lives. You have to take time to be holy.

So remember the Lord's own

exhortations — "ask," "seek," "knock," "strive"—and do not yield.

## ONLY ONE GOSPEL.

S. W. MILLER

(Galatians 1: 8)

**T**HE Gospel preached to the Thessalonians was the Gospel of the Grace of God, and so effective was it, that they turned from their idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. That is what the Gospel effects wherever it is believed. In the case of the Thessalonians, the change wrought in the hearts of these idol worshippers was observed by people all around and tidings of their faith God-ward was spread abroad. The Gospel preached to the Galatians and believed by them was the same, yet the condition of the Galatians was nothing like that of the Thessalonians, for so bad was their state that the Apostle Paul had to say he stood in doubt of them.

What then was wrong with them, seeing in both cases, the same Gospel was preached and believed? Well, as the Apostle says, the Galatians had been bewitched, and we also need to be careful lest we be bewitched by that which is another Gospel. Having believed the Gospel of our salvation, the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode in us, and is the power to maintain us in right relations with God. But the Galatians also had believed and received the Spirit.

These poor Galatians had been

bewitched, betrayed and robbed of all Christian joy and happiness by the false teachers who had come amongst them. Now all Christians should be happy, and if we are not so, there must be something radically wrong with our Christianity. I believe Christians are normally the happiest people on earth. They are the only people who have any right to be happy because they alone have had their sins put away, and they are the only people on earth with a hope that will be fully realized.

The Galatians started well, for the Holy Spirit is not only God's seal upon us, but He brings the love of God into our hearts, and assures us we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The same Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, and the proof that we shall enter into heavenly glory. The teachers who came from Palestine to Galatia unsettled them by telling them that if they would have right spiritual experience, they must keep the law. They said in effect, "Now that you are Christians, you must keep the law, or you will make no progress." Thus another gospel was preached—a gospel which mingled law and grace.

This admixture of Judaism and Christianity has been preached so

effectively that it has swept through this favoured land in which we dwell and brought many thousands beneath its blighting influence. This is that spurious gospel that robs God of His glory, and the sinner of his hope, and creates "miserable sinners." For so long as we are trying to produce something for God from ourselves — who have been condemned and set aside by the cross of Christ—we are "miserable sinners" indeed. The law can only apply to a man in the flesh. It tells us what we ought to be. This brings forth the oft-repeated cry, "Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners!"

Now we want to avoid the serious error into which these Galatian Christians fell. The only way to avoid it is to listen to no other gospel than that which we have heard—the Gospel of our Salvation. There is a definite movement to get people more "broad-minded." The people behind this movement tell us, "You are very narrow-minded Christians," and they invite us to broaden out and accept some other gospel which is not of God.

You may say, "I never go to listen to another gospel." But do you ever read booklets that are thrust under your doors or through your letter boxes, carrying another gospel, or do you buy books that are nicely printed and have attractive covers without considering what they teach? I am certain the Devil's printing press is turning out far more than the Christian press, and I am going to appeal to you to be careful what you read. Paul wrote to Timothy telling him to remember what he had heard and from whom

he heard it. Here is a book, modern and attractive in appearance; what is wrong with it? If you have doubts about the teaching contained therein, take it to someone who is older in the faith, and able to give a sound judgment. A better safeguard is to buy books from Christian publishers you know, rather than to read those written and published by people you don't know.

Then there are the hymns we sing. We can pick up all kinds of hymns and choruses, and it is remarkable how the words of the hymns become part of our very being. We often express our thoughts in the language of the hymns we sing, and if a hymn is contrary to revealed truth, we may find our thoughts going astray, and the very foundation of our faith undermined. So be careful what you sing as well as what you read. Stick to the known good. Do not experiment with the doubtful. The Apostle John, when addressing the babes in the Christian family, warned them of the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son, for very young believers are particularly subject to the attacks of the enemy in that form.

It is a mistake to think the anti-christian teacher comes like a big, violent dragon. On the contrary, he is often a pleasant, plausible and attractive man. If the great enemy of our souls wishes to administer a poisoned pill, he does not coat it with sand or tar. The danger in the Christian family is that the young people are deceived by the sugar coating. I therefore beseech you to be very careful not to lay hold of another gospel or teaching which will turn you from the simplicity of the true Gospel.

We listened to our brother a few minutes ago, speaking of power in our spiritual experience. I remind you we are definitely sealed with the Holy Spirit. He is in us for a purpose, linking us with Christ and bringing us into the joy of salvation. We cannot grieve Him away, but we can grieve Him, and hinder His work of taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to us.

If we are lacking in spiritual

power, it is because we are grieving the Holy Ghost in some way, and it may be through reading books which are derogatory to Christ, or doing things that are robbing Him of His glory. The Holy Ghost is jealous of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us submit to the leading, guiding and direction of the Holy Spirit, who will confirm our souls in the truth, and then shall we triumph as we serve and wait for our Lord's return.

## PROPITIATION ACCOMPLISHED.

J. R. JAMESON

(Romans 5: 6, 8)

**I**N verses 6 and 8 of Romans 5 there appear two words, "Christ died." I venture to say that these two words are amongst the mightiest that have ever been penned. And the penning of these words is but the fruit of the mighty fact that Christ died. That is the fact that lies at the centre of God's purpose. If you could remove it then everything spiritual would crumble and pass away. There is not one of us would have been here. Christ died for the ungodly, Christ died for us. What does it reveal? It reveals the very heart of God Himself, unfolded in all His matchless love.

But then Christ has been raised triumphant from the grave, and the One that died now lives at God's right hand—a glorified Saviour. It is because of these two mighty facts that the Apostle Paul was led by the Spirit of God to pen the Epistle to the Romans. If you go through the epistle you will find almost forty different nouns appearing before the

two words "of God;" for example, the righteousness of God, the power of God, the truth of God, the wrath of God, and the love of God. It is God we have to do with. It is the very God that we have sinned against who has come out to us in all the richness of His grace to bless the wretched, guilty, rebellious sons of men. Only through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ could this be.

The first five chapters of the epistle have to do with the acts of sin we have committed. When you go past verse 11 of chapter 5, the subject is sin, the root principle that dwells within. In our Bible reading a long word was used—propitiation. Someone said to me they did not understand it. I am going to give an illustration that may help you to understand it.

In Leviticus 6, we are told that if a man robbed his fellow of something then he must repay; he must

restore what he had taken away, and a fifth part more, which means if 10s. has been stolen then 12s. must be paid back. The man who was robbed was better off in the end.

Now God has been robbed of His glory by sin. His honour has been dragged in the dust. Who is going to restore it? None but Christ could satisfy the demands of the Throne of God and the glory of God. You have heard the Scripture; "Then I restored that which I took not away" (Psa. 69: 4). Man has robbed God and only the Lord Jesus Christ could restore.

But see the wonderful way in which he has restored it! He has not only restored glory to God, He has added a new glory, even redemption glory.

As an illustration, suppose a man has been robbed of £1,000 and someone offers to restore that amount, but instead of paying in bank notes he pays in golden sovereigns. The loser is now a positive gainer. But further suppose he pays in coins of an old issue, now worth £50 apiece. The loser is now greatly enriched. He has £50,000!

Such was the dignity and glory of the One who offered Himself on Calvary that the Throne of God has been covered with glory. Not only have the requirements of the Throne of God been met, but His honour has been maintained, and He Himself has been glorified. As a consequence Christ is crowned and seated at His own right hand in heaven.

That lets me into the secret of propitiation. In result the gates of mercy are open to poor guilty sinners the whole wide world over.

Thus God is offering divine righteousness to every guilty sinner under the sun, and this is the only garment in which you can stand before God. God provides this beautiful dress, and He has put the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so that we can be at home in the very presence of God. So if you preach the Gospel don't just offer them pardon so they may get into heaven. What a God is ours and how richly He gives! We are to enter into the living enjoyment of communion with Himself.

We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. There are many believers who do not realize what His resurrection means. He lives now on behalf of those who trust Him. We shall be saved by His life on the Throne; apart from that, Satan would get the victory over us.

It is a grand step forward, after having our sins forgiven, to rejoice in the very God who has come out to bless us. I wish we knew better the greatness of His love. Ask God in prayer to reveal to you the value and the preciousness of the death of Christ, as it affects Him and as it affects yourself. Your heart will then overflow in worship to the God who has blessed you, and your whole life will be revolutionized, and you will live for Christ alone.

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Faith needs nothing but God's Word. The sight of the eyes is constantly tending to dim the estimate which faith forms. If I am not feeding on the Word, faith is not fed. Natural reasoning is fed by what we see, and faith is fed by what God has revealed to the soul.

# LOVE NOT THE WORLD.

J. BLACKBURN

(Hebrews 12: 16; 1 John 2: 14)

**J**ACOB and Esau are two men whose lives we have in some detail in the Word of God. I can well imagine someone saying, "If you ask me my opinion of these two men, I prefer Esau. Jacob was a mother's boy, and a shady individual at the very best, but Esau was a fine, upstanding fellow who knew the outdoor life. Did not Jacob take an unfair advantage of the extreme exhaustion of his brother in order to gain the birthright, and go to extraordinary lengths to deceive his blind old father? And did he not clear out from his father's house instead of staying to face the music like a man? I find absolutely nauseous the obsequious way he went bowing to Esau, when he met him again . . . I prefer Esau."

It is very easy to see why anybody should say that. But there is one point of tremendous importance we have to notice. God has recorded his verdict upon these two men, and has said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." How comes it that our judgment can be so opposed to the judgment of God? In the first place there are one or two very admirable things recorded of Jacob. When he got a job with Laban and fell in love with his daughter, making a pact that for seven years' service he should have the hand of Rachel, he served faithfully and the years seemed to him but a few days for the great love he bore her. It seems to me a fine picture. His love disciplined him to a long and patient course of arduous toil until the work was done and the prize gained.

It reminds me of a much greater thing: of the great, all-powerful motive of the true Christian life; of the man who said, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge . . . that they which live should . . . live . . . unto Him which died for them and rose again." And impelled by that love of Christ that passeth knowledge he went forth to do and to dare, and if need be to die, in His service. When I look for some New Testament parallel to Jacob's word, "In the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night," I turn to 2 Corinthians 11, where Paul gives the proofs of his being a servant of Christ, "In labours more abundant . . . in cold and nakedness." Thus this feature in Jacob's life reminds us of the wonderful motive power of the love of Christ in the lives of His servants.

In the second place we can see some disgraceful episodes in Jacob's life, but **God** saw them also, and Jacob has become the great monument to the fact that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He deceived his father; and right to the end of his days Jacob was deceived and deceived again. God saw that he had the root of blessedness in him; that is, faith; and the shortcomings we can all see, God did not overlook.

In contrast with Jacob, Esau stands condemned as a profane person. What does profane mean? The New Testament word fundamentally signifies a door that is open to everything that comes along. It

is intimately allied to the word threshold. A profane person has no power within to enable him to choose between what is good and evil. A profane person is one whose heart and life are wide open to everything the devil sends abroad in the world. As an example of this, in the Acts of the Apostles, they thought that Paul profaned the Temple by bringing in through its doors a man who had no right to stand in the holy courts of God.

So Esau was a profane person. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes had right of way in his heart and life. For one morsel of meat he sold his birthright. We have a most incisive picture of what happened upon that day—all the appeal of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Esau had been hunting and returned home exhausted. The purely animal desires for food and rest overcame all else with him. It was also Jacob at his very worst, and so he was later allowed to be on the horns of just such a dilemma as that. But it was also Jacob at his best, esteeming highly the blessing of God whom his fathers had known.

We live in a profane age, in which it is easy for professing Christians to forget the word, "Love not the world." The love of the world robs us entirely of our birthright and the true blessing of God, for "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." Love of the world drives out the love of the Father. What is the forbidden treasure, the thing that has to be excluded from the lives of Christians?

"Never at even, pillowed on a pleasure,  
Sleep with the wings of aspiration  
furled.  
Save the last mite of the forbidden  
treasure,  
Keep for my joys a world within the  
world."

It is **loving** the world which is forbidden. We are told elsewhere that while we use the world we are not to abuse it. These words are addressed to the young men.

What a tremendous thing it is to stand on the threshold of manhood and womanhood, for then impressions are made and decisions embraced, that decide whether our lives are to be profane or whether we are going to tread the simple, humble path of the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit would lead us to starve those affections which are forbidden, and bathe ourselves in these things which will awaken and bring to a flame the love of Christ that has been implanted in our hearts. As responsible persons, we are to set our minds on things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

In this connection the old Puritan, Richard Baxter, says, "If thou feelest thy love not yet burn, show thy heart the Son of the Living God, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Plead with thy frozen soul till thou canst say with David, 'While I mused, the fire burned.' If this will not rouse thy love, plead with it as the Lord did with Peter, until it is forced to cry out, 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.'"

Look more closely at the elements of the world's appeal. John uses the

word, "flesh" to signify the body in a literal material sense. Our bodies have need of food and rest and many other things, but God warns us against loving them. Of course we need food in order to live, but it has been said that some eat to live, while others live to eat. The forbidden thing is that we should **love** what the flesh desires.

The central thought in the lust of the eyes is **covetousness**. A main motive power in the world is the desire of men for things they set their eyes upon; but we are told we are not to love the desire of our eyes.

The third great thing is the pride of life. Of three main words in the New Testament translated "life," this one signifies the history or story of life, as in the phrases, "a long life," "a busy life." The word translated "pride" is only otherwise used in James 4: 16, of those who do what pleases them and forget "If the Lord will." The pride of life, therefore, is a description of the

manner of life which has self-pleasing for its object instead of God's will.

The perfect Man said, "I come to do Thy will, O my God," and "Not My will, but Thine be done." The great, positive thing to be set before us in our Christian lives is, "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Sometimes in the many perplexities of life I have in the presence of the Lord searched for some simple, guiding principle, and many a time I have come back to this, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."

In writing of the statue in London of the great Christian, General Gordon, Winston Churchill says, "The great general, serene amidst the roar of traffic as once in the noise of battle, resolves the problems of the dark Soudan, and, **inattentive to the clamour of men, enquires what is acceptable to God.**" Let us follow the steps of Him who did His Father's will, for "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

## THE DRAWN SWORD.

J. F. BIRSS

(Joshua 5: 13—15)

**I** WANT to speak about the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It is not only that we should **have** that sword but that we should **use** it. So I want to introduce you at the very beginning to the source of all power—to the Captain of the Lord's host. It is with Him we have to do if we are going to be of service to Him, for it is He who gives to every man his work.

Here we have Joshua very perturbed as he thought of this unruly

people of whom he had become the leader. As he walked that evening by the walls of Jericho he saw a man standing with his sword drawn in his hand. This was the One who was going to brief Joshua for the mighty contest for the land of Canaan. We know how they swept through the land, gaining many victories, although they did not utterly subdue it.

To-day we remember how that One who stood then with a sword in

His hand has won a mighty victory. The conflict of this age is of a very different kind, for since He has gone into death and risen victorious over it, we see Him standing there on the right hand of God, not with a drawn sword in His hand, but the marks of the nails. We recognize who was this One whom Joshua saw.

“ Christ Jesus, unseen Leader,  
Thy sword is in Thy hand,  
As Captain of the host of God,  
Thou takest the command.”

It is only when we get into His presence, realize we are standing on holy ground, take the shoes off our feet and worship there, we will be able to go out and really serve Him.

Let me now point out the kind of deliverers that God chose after Joshua to deliver His people. We are living in a day very like the days we read of in the Book of Judges. At first it looked as though everything would be done as God wanted it to be done, but alas, although there was no failure on God's part, there was failure on their part, and those people, who had gone forward so rapidly, went into a decline. We too live in the days of sad declension. Yet God still sends deliverers so that we may be able to stand in these very difficult days. Although our great Captain has finished His warfare, we are still in the field of battle. We need to go forward and use the sword for Him.

In Judges 1 and 3 we read how Othniel was a deliverer from Mesopotamia, a type of the world. He had a sharp sword, as chapter 1 shows, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.

There is only one way to meet the temptations of the world, and it is

with the Word of God. The living Word of God, used by the Spirit of God, is the power that is going to meet them. Let us see to it we know this Word, and that it abides in us, and we too will be able to meet all these dreadful temptations that come—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

When the tempter came to the Lord Jesus with similar temptations after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, He replied to each of the three, “ It is written.” That is to be our answer as temptations come to us, “ It is written.” The power of God connected with the Word of God will go forward to victory for us, as of old the Spirit used the sword against the Mesopotamians, and they were utterly defeated.

Then again in chapter 3 we read of Eglon, King of Moab and Ehud. I think here we have a picture of the flesh, of which we have been hearing. We know that it wars against the Spirit of God. How are we going to meet it? How often do we let the flesh have its way and we like to sit down at ease and have a good time, but God's Word will come to us and rouse us out of it. We have to take that two-edged sword into our own hands, for it is a sword that cuts you and cuts me—that cuts both ways.

Ehud's sword was a cubit long, which indicates human capacity. Don't let us try to be clever and say things that are beyond us when we speak, but let us handle what we have experienced for ourselves and use the Word of God we have made our own, and then we will be able

to use it properly. If we are not going to do that, we are not going to be of any use as swordsmen. Keep it hidden as Ehud did until the time comes for using it. Don't get it in your hand and start showing off with it, but wait until the opportunity arises and then hesitate not, but use it. We need to turn that weapon against ourselves. How often we need to hear the Word of God that jolts people's consciences. If our enemies gain on us we must fall back on the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Judges 4 gives us a picture of our great arch-enemy, the devil. Sisera had the people of Israel mightily oppressed, and that is what the devil would do if he possibly could—bind us as captives. Deborah, whom God chose as deliverer—the name means “a bee”—came with a sting. We need a sting occasionally to be up and doing, to be facing the enemy, and not to be sitting down and letting him do as he will. The King's business requires haste. We cannot wait until the enemy destroys us. If we don't go forward to the fight

with a drawn sword in our hands, the enemy will come in like a flood and we need to be cast upon our God to be able to overcome him. The only sword he fears is the Word of God. To use that sword properly we must practice with it. We have to be instructed in the Word so that we can use this weapon.

In Judges 6 and 7 we have the Midianites and Gideon—the man who preserved his wheat from the foes and ultimately prevailed. Earthly things so often take away the attention of God's people from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is not enough to attend good readings and listen to good addresses. We must, like Gideon, make sure of obtaining sustenance for ourselves. We need to be hearers of the Word and doers of it. Are you going to take the sword? Let it be,

For us—swords drawn up to the gates  
of heaven.

Oh, may no coward spirit seek to leaven  
The warrior code, the calling that is  
ours;

Forbid that we should sheathe our sword  
in flowers.

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## Standing and State.

A well-established river never changes its general course, although it may vary greatly as to the volume of its flow. When the river runs low the dry, ugly, earthy channel is seen, but when the water flows in abundantly the stream becomes full, forceful and beautiful.

The Christian, in respect to his standing and state, is very much like that. When, through neglect of Bible study and prayer, the Holy Spirit is grieved, the spiritual life runs down and then the old carnal nature, the earthy channel, becomes more and more evident. But when new and fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit come pouring in regularly, and the devotional life is kept up by Bible study, prayer, watching and witnessing, the life is full, forceful and fruitful. Under both conditions the standing is the same, but only under the latter can the state of the individual be considered normal and fruitful.

# THE FACTS: Their Meaning and Power. R. McCALLUM

(1 Corinthians 15: 1 —5; Hebrews 13: 20)

I WILL just speak to you suggestively and leave you to fill in the gaps for yourselves. We are still using the same sword of the Spirit and there is not one of us can get on without it. When Paul wrote this 15th chapter he was not writing to those who were outside the faith, but to those who had heard and received the Word, who were saved by it and knew that there was salvation in no other way. Yet he reminds these people of the basic facts of the Gospel.

Firstly, I want to bring to your notice that there are simple facts connected with the Gospel—facts which I suppose any thoughtful, worldly man may know to be true. Christ lived; He died and was buried; and he rose again the third day. I don't know if the acceptance of these bare facts in themselves would spell salvation for anyone, but secondly, there is doctrine or authoritative teaching connected with them. Thirdly, out of this there emerges Christianity.

I want to remind you of the words of the Apostle, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." It is very essential, especially for young people, to remember that Paul **received** it, and the Corinthians had **received** it. They had heard it from the Apostle and they had received it into their hearts. He had received it in another way. He tells us in the Epistle to the Galatians that the Gospel, which he preached to them, had not been received from men; he had not been

taught it, but that he had received it by revelation of Jesus Christ. He was different from the other apostles. He had not been with Christ in the days of His flesh; he had received this message from the exalted and glorified Christ.

Don't let us forget this for we have to meet in our daily work not only those opponents who are obviously hostile to the Gospel, but people who seem so charming and may seem to be saying the same thing, and yet when you get down to the foundations you find they are preaching a gospel which is emasculated of all its power. They say, "Don't put too much emphasis on His death, remember His life; that beautiful life on the earth in which He went about doing good." Now you cannot over-emphasize the life of Christ, which was so pleasing to God. He could say ere he left, speaking to His Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

But don't let us be cheated out of our birthright by placing emphasis upon His life at the expense of His death. Observe where the New Testament places the emphasis. The last six chapters of Mark's Gospel are taken up with details of the last week of Christ's life, the most of them with His death. You can easily calculate that if the same amount of detail had been given to the 3 to 3½ years of Christ's public ministry, instead of having 16 chapters, Mark's Gospel would have run into over one thousand chapters! The

other gospels place the emphasis similarly. Where did Christ Himself place the emphasis? It is so often overlooked that Christ placed great emphasis upon His coming death, which had to be accomplished before it could be explained.

How often this occurs in John's Gospel. For instance, "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep;" "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die;" "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me. This he said, signifying what death He should die." Again, on the Mount of Transfiguration what was the theme? They spoke of His decease."

Yet once more, when the Lord instituted His supper of remembrance, what was it that He indicated? He asked to be recalled not by His unique birth, not by His holy manner of life, not by the miracles he had done, but by His death. A man does not ask to be remembered by what is of small importance. He asks to be remembered by that which is central to all He came to do. Christ's death is central and fundamental and we must place the emphasis there. Paul did not add some superstructure of his own to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Men will tell you that Paul was a philosopher and superimposed philosophical ideas, influenced by his Jewish training, upon the simple teaching of Christ. That is not true. How the Apostle would have repelled such an idea. He received what he preached from Jesus Christ. His Gospel had a Divine origin.

Here are the facts of the Gospel. "Christ died for our sins according

to the Scriptures;" "He was buried" and . . . rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Yet to believe that Christ died, as an historical fact without moral significance, will bring blessing to no one. Christ's death had a meaning, and a meaning different from any other death. He died for our sins. His death was penal. It has a forensic value. His death was vicarious, and unless it had been penal and propitiatory it would have been irrational and absolutely useless.

Men speak about this modern age and modern man, and they will tell you the modern man revolts against this ethical paradox of One who is innocent dying in the place of one who is guilty. They cannot accept it. But the One who died was not merely an innocent Man, He was God manifested in the flesh. What is it about the old carnal mind that revolts against God?

There never was a time when the Cross was a greater offence to mankind than in the first century of the Christian era. The Cross was, to the haughty Roman and the fastidious Greek, an emblem of all that was despised and degraded. Crucifixion was the penalty suffered by those who were the riff-raff of the nation. It was the high water mark of folly for anyone to get up and glory in the Cross. We can understand it, even when offences connected with that penal code had passed. It was the most degrading kind of death anyone could endure—this death to which He was committed with all its lingering pain and pangs. And even when the penal code that made it an offence had passed, the scandal of the Cross in its spiritual meaning did not fade away, because the Cross

smites the pride of man right on the forehead. It brings him down in the dust before a Holy God.

"We live in days when there are still evidences in abundance that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Surely this distinguishes Christianity from every other religion. Other religions may have an ethical code but Christianity is not merely an ethic. There is behind it the mighty power of God. Christianity is not one of the comparative religions of the world; it stands alone, solitary in its glory. The power of God is manifested in the Gospel, the mighty

power of God that was evidenced in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and now operates in the believer.

Let us remember that every doctrine is accompanied by a duty: every revelation is followed by responsibility. Our desire, I am sure, is to grow in grace and to be found manifesting the excellencies of Christ our Saviour. For this reason we heartily "Amen" the prayers we read from Hebrews 13: 20, 21—"Now the God of peace . . . make you perfect in every good work to do His will . . . to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

## ETERNAL LIFE.

J. MCBROOM.

As to the Nations—Matthew 25: 46

**S**PEAKING of eternal life in connection with the nations, we must go back beyond Abraham to the beginning. Two thousand years had passed before his call, during which time God had dealt with mankind as one great family. National life did not come in till after the Flood at the building of Babel. In the early chapters of Genesis we see the distinction between the line of Cain which built up the world's system with man away from God, and the line of Seth which stood apart calling on the name of the Lord. The **lie** came in with Adam, **murder** with Cain, and **polygamy** with Lamech. Cain was marked by hatred, but built a city calling it after his son Enoch, which means "dedicated." There, music was cultivated and poetry. Then came the trades, and then the world

system began to grow where the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life flourished. The result, as we know, was that apostasy which ended in violence and corruption and the Flood.

With Noah's posterity things got so bad that God had to call out Abraham, whom He made heir of unconditional promises. These promises were to him and his posterity, but included the blessing of the Gentiles. Israel then became the people in which the ways of God were worked out in view of the coming of the Son. There we get in type redemption, the House of God and His Kingdom, the services of the House with its priestly family. Here are seen a long line of patriarchs, prophets, priests and kings, with covenants, promises, sacrifices

and types, all shadowing forth the coming One.

But while all this was seen in Israel we have to go back to the beginning for the presentation of Christ both in promise and in type **in relation to all mankind.** The woman's seed could not be confined to any short of the whole race, and the animal of sacrifice, with whose skin the fallen pair were clothed, spake of the death of Christ and man's acceptance in Him.

The promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 22 include, as we have said, the blessing of the nations, and that blessing is eternal life here on earth, under the woman's seed, the Virgin's Son, who as Son of Man will wield the sceptre of universal rule. In correspondence with this we find a long chain of both men and women from the Gentiles stretching down from Abraham. The names of Job, Melchisedec and Jethro need only be mentioned as amongst the most illustrious names in Scripture. Women, too, for both Tamar, Rahab and Ruth were outside the pale of Israel. All three of these have a place in the line of our Lord's genealogy in Matthew 1, as well as her that had been the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Some of David's mighty men, too, were outsiders, and as we go on in the history there are often bright witnesses such as Jonadab, Ebed-melech and the Ethiopian eunuch. Jacob, when dying, blessed thirteen tribes (blessing two tribes under Joseph), doubtless intending to show that by travelling beyond the administrative number, twelve, God could not be confined to Israel.

Turning to the Gospel of Luke, who is the only Gentile employed by

the Holy Spirit to write in the Bible, we find our Lord presented as Son of Man, and in Him the appearing of the grace of God, carrying with it salvation for all men. All through the present age that is the position, for God, as Saviour, gave His only begotten Son that whosoever will may have everlasting life. But God has linked up the blessing of the nations with the restoration of his earthly people, Israel. This necessitates a worldwide evangelization after the Church is translated to heaven. This work will be taken up by the Jews where it has already been laid down. In the end of Matthew the disciples were commissioned to go into the whole world and disciple all nations. This they began but did not carry out. They handed it over to Paul.

In resuming His dealings with Israel, God will fit His messengers to carry the Gospel of the coming Kingdom to the nations. The great assize, when the Son of Man "shall . . . sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25: 31-46) will be the outcome of this work. All nations shall be gathered before Him. In Acts 8, 9 and 10, where three representative men are called, we see an indication of this. They sprang from Ham (the Ethiopian), Shem (Saul of Tarsus) and Japheth (Cornelius and his household). Whilst He sent his servants for both the Ethiopian and for Cornelius, He came Himself for Saul. This is exactly what He will do presently at His coming. The judgment is final for both sheep and goats, and these shall go into everlasting punishment and the righteous into everlasting life. What then does this life mean for these nations?

In the glowing language of Isaiah

II: 10, there shall be a Root of Jesse standing as a banner of the peoples: note, here it should be not the people, which usually means Israel, but "peoples," in the plural. These nations shall seek to it and his resting place shall be glory. As Israel was gathered to Him, so must be the Gentiles. "I will gather all nations and tongues: and they shall come and see my glory . . . and I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations . . . to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame neither have seen My glory: and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles" (Isa. 66: 18, 19). Then shall be fulfilled the words of Moses' song, "Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people" (cited in Romans 15: 10), which also adds, "Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles and laud Him all ye peoples." The Psalms are full of this, as for example, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad" (Psa. 97: 1). "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands" (Psa. 100: 1). "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles" (Mal. 1: 11). But fallen nature cannot do this. What then? "My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait for Me and on mine arm shall they trust" (Isa. 51: 5).

Now judgment here is administra-

tion and means blessing: the blessing of righteousness and salvation. The Gentiles, having been blessed with righteousness and salvation, are fitted to join in the celebrations of praise. They worship the Lord in holy splendour. He is the great King: with Israel it is the King Messiah, with the Gentiles the Son of Man, with both He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The long despised and rejected King comes unto His place and out of Zion. He shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth. Here then, after the long-drawn-out night of sin, sorrow, disease, weeping and death, we have a scene worthy of Him. The Lord Himself is the doorway into it all, and the sheep of Matthew 25, like the sheep of John 10, have eternal life. Its features for them are accomplished righteousness at the cross, and salvation from every hostile power. They, under the Lord as Son of Man, the nation of Israel under Him as Son of David, and the Assembly, knowing Him in every relationship and office He fills, under and with Him, as the beloved Son of the Father.

This will go on throughout the millennial age, but in view of eternity a change in their bodily condition will be effected, for flesh and blood cannot enter eternity. A new heaven and a new earth follow. But of redeemed Gentiles it is said, "These shall go away into everlasting life" (Matt. 25: 46).

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The Bible Study article, on Revelation, which has been appearing regularly in our pages, has been omitted this time, owing to the limited space that is available. It is hoped that in our next issue (D.V.) it will be resumed, and continued regularly until the book is finished.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 15: 1—16: 21)

CHAPTER 15 begins another subsection of the book. Chapter 14 gave a series of visions, in which things were presented to us in brief summary. In verses 9 and 10 the wrath of God against the beast-worshippers was announced. We now learn in much more detail how that wrath will be poured out.

The seven angels having the seven last plagues are introduced to us as "another sign in heaven." This expression has occurred twice before at the beginning of chapter 12, though our Authorized translators used the word "wonder" instead of "sign." The three signs in heaven are, then, first, that of the elect Israel, out of whom Christ sprang; second, that of the dragon, the great opponent of the Man Child, operating by means of the two beasts; third, that of the angels to whom it is given to pour out the vials filled with the wrath of God, which wrath is specially directed against the beasts and all who own their authority. The wrath of the dragon and the beasts is against the Man Child and all who own Him. The wrath of God is against the dragon and all who own him.

It is evident, then, that chapter 15 does not follow chapter 14 chronologically, but rather breaks back to a time preceding the execution of the harvest and vintage judgments by the Son of Man; just as we find the wrath of God against Babylon announced under the seventh vial at the end of chapter 16, and then full details of Babylon's fall given in chapters 17 and 18. Its fall indeed

had been briefly announced in verse 8 of chapter 14.

But before John had to contemplate the outpouring of the vials in detail he was given a vision of those who will be carried in triumph as overcomers through that terrible period and then ascribe the glory of their victory to God. The mingling of fire with the sea of glass would indicate that these victors had been subjected to the fiery trial of death but from their martyrdom had stepped into victory. Consequently their song is not only that of Moses but of the Lamb. The first song recorded in Scripture is that of Moses in Exodus 15, celebrating Jehovah's victory in crushing the might of Egypt and redeeming His people. Our verse gives us the last record of a song in Scripture, and again the song of Moses appears for once more and finally God is crushing the adversary and redeeming His people. But coupled with that is the song of the once suffering but now triumphant Lamb, for in their suffering they had trodden in His steps; and it is never to be forgotten that He triumphed in and through His suffering and apparent defeat.

The song celebrated God's works and ways in judgment. They may be full of mystery while in process of accomplishment, but once completed they are seen to be great and marvellous, righteous and true. The names by which He is addressed are not those indicating the peculiar relationship in which He stands to the church, but those relating to Israel and the nations—the Jehovah,

Elohim, Shaddai, of the Old Testament. And then again, the correct reading here is evidently, "King of nations," and not "King of saints." There is a strong resemblance here to Jeremiah 10: 6, 7, where the wrath of God against the nations is prophetically announced. The King of nations will subdue all nations in His wrath, and vindicate and glorify His elect.

The song closes in giving three reasons why God should be feared and glorified. First, because of what He is in His gracious holiness; second, because of His supremacy, which will ultimately command the homage of all nations; third, because the rightness of His judgments is now being made manifest. The word here is literally, "righteousnesses," the same word as is used for the righteous acts of the saints in verse 8 of chapter 19. God's judgments are so righteous that the prophet could say, "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26: 9). In contrast to this, Israel will at last have to confess, as we do today, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64: 8).

Having been granted the vision of these, who though victims under the beast were nevertheless victors over his power, a wholly new scene unrolled itself before John's eyes. He saw the seven angels with the seven last plagues come out of "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven." This is a remarkable phrase. In the Old Testament we read of "the tabernacle of testimony" in the wilderness and also of the "temple" when the people

were in the land; both of them figures of the true. Here both figures are coalesced. Out from the inner shrine of the Divine presence, where the testimony to all His purposes had been preserved, came the seven angels, empowered to deliver the final strokes of judgment, previous to the manifestation of His purpose for the earth by the appearing of Christ.

The two verses which close chapter 15, emphasize the exceeding solemnity of this moment. The vials handed to the angels were full of the wrath of God who lives to the ages of ages—the eternity of His Being adding an infinitude of weight to His wrath. They were handed to them by one of the Living Creatures, that we saw in chapter 4, symbolizing the power, endurance, intelligence and swiftness of the Creator's ways in dealing with a rebellious earth. And again, the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God. We had smoke from the pit in chapter 9, symbolic of Satanic influences which excluded all that is Divine. Here we have the Divine glory excluding all men and all that is merely human, while these last plagues were in process. There is an analogy between the plagues of Egypt, preceding the death of the firstborn, and these seven plagues, which will precede the revelation of God's Firstborn from heaven.

As we read chapter 16, we shall notice that these last plagues are very specially God's answer in judgment to the enormous evil which reaches its climax in the beast and his followers. This is mentioned specifically in verses 2, 10, 13, but it is also inferred, we think, in other

details that are mentioned. The first plague will affect the more stable and ordered peoples, the masses of whom will have received the mark of the beast. Upon these God puts His mark in the form of "a noisome and grievous sore." The sixth plague in Egypt was of this sort, but bearing in mind the symbolic character of the Revelation, we regard this as indicating a fretting evil in the region of mind and spirit, while not denying that it may also have a more material application. Their lives will be made a misery to them under the mighty hand of God.

The second vial affects the sea; that is, the less formed and stable masses of mankind. They too come under judgment for though the beast specially dominates the ten kingdoms, power is also given him "over all kindreds, and tongues and nations" (13: 7). The second plague means spiritual death to all who come under it. The figure is very graphic. The sea became dead blood, bringing death on all within its compass.

The third vial affected rivers and fountains in the same way. These are symbolic of the sources and channels of spiritual life, just as are literal fountains and rivers as regards our natural lives. The sources being corrupted, apostate, dead, all hope of a revivifying is gone, and men are hopelessly shut up to their doom. It will be with them even as it was with Pharaoh, when the Lord hardened his heart. Are men today inclined to cavil at this, even as they do regarding Pharaoh? It is just at this point that there comes in a two-fold angelic testimony to the rightness of this stroke of judgment; and angels

have powers of observation, and opportunity for observing, far exceeding that of the greatest and wisest of men. Those smitten had themselves been smiters of saints and prophets, and this of course would be specially true of the beast and his followers. Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, by His angel, is acting and they are simply getting what they richly deserve.

The fourth vial affects the sun; the symbol of supreme authority. Here, however, it is clearly the symbol not of anything Divine but of the supreme power in this lower scheme of created things. The power of evil, vested for the time in the beasts, becomes oppressive and intolerable like burning heat. When their power was assumed men accepted it as great and wonderful (see 13: 4, 14), but now it becomes under the Divine judgment a terrible infliction. Yet such is the moral and spiritual death into which men are plunged, as seen in the third vial, that instead of humbling themselves in any way they only blaspheme the God of heaven: in other words, like Pharaoh, they only harden their hearts.

The similarity that exists between the objects of judgment under the first four vials and those under the first four trumpets is too clear to be missed; only in chapter 8 the sphere is limited to a third part. Here the judgments are more complete and more intense, and appear to be on God's part an answer to the defiant and persecuting actions of the beast and his followers.

This is seen more particularly in the outpouring of the fifth vial. A

concentrated judgment falls upon the seat of the beast, and it presents us with a terrible picture. In Egypt the last plague before the death of the firstborn was "a thick darkness," even "darkness which may be felt" so dark that it stopped all movement. But it is even more terrible when a thick darkness descends upon the minds of men, blacking out from them every ray of light from God. There are heathen today still in very dense darkness, but it is even worse when atheists or agnostics, living in Christendom, have to say—as sometimes they do—to some simple believer that they envy him his faith, and wish they could believe but they cannot. Their experience is, they confess, a painful one. Here apostasy is complete, and their darkness painful to the last degree. Their pains and sores only provoke them to blasphemy, and they are far from repentance, which is the only door into recovery and blessing.

The sixth vial also has a resemblance to the sixth trumpet. Again the Euphrates is affected, which is one of the great natural barriers between the East and the West. Under this plague the barrier between the great masses of Asiatic peoples and the nations of Europe is removed and the assembling of both East and West becomes possible. The door is thus opened for the gathering of all the nations, as predicted in Joel 3. They little realize that they assemble for Jehovah to "roar out of Zion," and "to sit to judge all the heathen round about." But such is the case, as Joel says:

To begin with, it does not look like it, for verses 13 and 14 of our

chapter show that the power of the devil will be exerted to gather the nations together. The unclean spirits that go forth to influence men in this direction go forth from the trinity of evil—the dragon, the beast and the false prophet—and they wield super-human powers to sway the minds of men in the desired direction. But in all this, unconsciously to themselves, they do what God in His ways of wisdom and judgment has determined before to be done. They are simply preparing themselves for the last stroke of overwhelming judgment—that treading of the winepress of the wrath of God that has already been mentioned. It is spoken of here as, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Verse 15 is clearly a parenthesis. It is as if the voice of the Lord Himself breaks in at this point, announcing His appearing when He will come as a thief on the nations wrapped in their darkness. In contrast to this, His coming for His saints is spoken of as the coming of the Bridegroom. Still there will be a remnant of Israel who will be carried through this terrible time without falling as martyrs, as well as some from among the Gentiles, represented by "the sheep" in Matthew 25: 33. These will be marked by watching and keeping themselves clear of defilement. But the reality of this will be tested, and apart from it a moment must come when all pretence will be stripped off and the nakedness and shame of the unreal and the untrue will be exposed.

Verse 16 picks up the thread from verse 14, though we might have expected it to read, "they gath-

ered," since the three unclean spirits went forth to do the gathering. It appears, however, that our thoughts are directed away from the Satanic agents employed to the Almighty God, who overruled their actions for His own purpose and glory. To Armageddon, meaning the Hill of Megiddo, were the multitudes called. In the valley of Megiddo the last godly king of David's line fell before the advancing nations. At last on that very spot the far greater Son of David will deal the swift death blow to all the proud might of the Gentiles. The incitement to gather together for their destruction takes place, however, as an act of Divine judgment under the sixth vial. We do not get details of what takes place when they are gathered together until we reach chapter 19, though we do get the fact of all nations being gathered predicted in verse 2 of Zechariah 14. There, too, it is God who does it, though as our chapter shows, He makes the power of the adversary serve His purpose.

The pouring out of the seventh vial completes these terrible strokes of wrath. This was declared by a voice from the inner shrine in heaven. The vial was poured into the air, which had been the seat of Satan's power, but from which he had been dislodged. Air is the life element for man, and now destruction begins to fall on him out of that very element. Thunders and lightnings are entirely beyond man's control, but there were voices controlling them. Moreover the earth was affected as well as the air.

Literal earthquakes there will doubtless be, but the earthquake of colossal magnitude here predicted

signifies, we think, the complete shattering of all man's organized systems. Verse 19 speaks of "the great city," of "the cities of the nations," and of "great Babylon." We understand by these the break up and collapse of the imposing civil system or empire which will find its centre in Rome, and also of similar systems, but subsidiary, which will be found among the more distant nations; and thirdly, of the great system of religious craft and deceit, which Babylon represents. The special **fierceness** of the Divine wrath is fittingly reserved for this last. Moreover, every island and mountain disappeared in the convulsion. Things that are detached from the mass like islands will not escape, and all that is lofty will go.

Verse 21 seems to connect itself with the thunders and lightnings of verse 18. Hail is symbolic of sharp, crushing judgment, inflicted directly from heaven, so direct that men cannot possibly attribute it to any other than God. Every stone is said to have the weight of a talent; that is, about 125lb. We believe that in historic times storms of exceptional violence have been recorded in which stones weighing 1 lb., or even a little more, have fallen with terrible effect, similar to that recorded in Exodus 9. We are clearly intended to understand by stones weighing over 1 cwt. each, a judgment from God of a supernatural and crushing kind.

And what is the effect of all this? Simply additional blasphemy hurled against God. As in Egypt the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, so in this day the hearts and consciences of men will be hardened beyond any

possible point of recovery. They are no longer atheists, even if once they were. There is a God, and they know it to their cost by these crushing judgments, but they defy Him. When the creature reaches such a

pitch of defiant hardness as here indicated, what can be expected but the delivery of the final stroke? Two parenthetical chapters intervene, however, before we have the record of that stroke in chapter 19.

## THE CONSTRAINT OF LOVE.

A. H. STORRIE

(2 Corinthians 5: 14, 15)

**I** WOULD like to call your attention particularly to the preposition "unto" in this passage. There are several prepositions in this chapter all connected with Christ, such as "with" in verse 8, "of" in verse 9, "in" in verse 17, and "for" in verse 20. But here it is "**unto** Him which died for them and rose again."

This scripture was suggested to my mind by Numbers 6, where we have the instructions for the Nazarite, and where the words, "unto the Lord," occur eight times. If a man took upon himself a vow to be a Nazarite, there were three things he must not do during the period of his separation to the Lord. Refraining from the three things did not make him a Nazarite: he became one of his own free will, desiring to separate himself to God. But once he had taken the vow, the three things were binding upon him.

Firstly, he must not drink or eat any product of the vine. Secondly, no razor must come upon his head. Thirdly, he was not to come into contact with a dead body. The subject of separation may sound rather dry. But, rightly understood from the word of God, the man who is utterly separated unto the Lord, and

thus separate from everything inconsistent with Him, is the happiest man on earth.

What do these three things signify for us? They denote a life of self-denial, because constrained by the love of Christ, we live no longer unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and lives again. This involves, in the first place, our refraining from all those earth-born pleasures, typified by the fruit of the vine, that would interfere with our complete separation unto God and devotion to our Lord.

As to the second, we are told in 1 Corinthians 11, that it is a shame for a man to have long hair, although a woman's hair is her glory. The long hair of the Nazarite, however, speaks to us of something more blessed—of the reproach of Christ. We read of Moses that when he was come to years he turned from all the glory of Egypt and threw in his lot with the people of God, for he knew that out of them in due time the Messiah would come. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, and chose the afflictions of God's people rather than the pleasures of sin.

Centuries later the epistle to the Hebrews was written. There was still the temple at Jerusalem with its golden beauty, its priests and its ritual, but all had become a hollow sham in the eyes of God. The religious leaders of the people had become the murderers of Christ. The inspired call came to those Hebrew Christians to go forth to Christ without the camp bearing His reproach. Christendom today has its organized religion, much of it unscriptural and modernistic. Is the call any less insistent to us?

Now as to the Nazarite not touching a dead body, or even a bone. Here we come to the teaching of Romans 6 and 7, as to which I read a statement a few days ago that seemed very strange, but which I found was sober truth. It was, "A Christian must stand in moral separation from himself." How can anybody do that? In our studies of the Roman Epistle we have been reading about the two natures that are in every Christian—"my flesh," in which no good dwells, and the "inward man," that delights in the law of God. If we starve the flesh and by the Spirit stand in moral separation from our old selves, the new life is developed.

Separation from evil is of great importance but we must not forget the positive side—separation unto the Lord. What was it that made Paul a great Nazarite in a spiritual sense? Two things: light and love. He has much to say to us as to the cross. In that cross he gloried, though it was the princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory. Yet Paul was not converted by the sight of Christ upon the cross. It was by the light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, and

by the voice of love—"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

I am sure we all agreed with the speaker who pointed out how the Gospels stress the death of Christ. We must stress it too, yet it was a risen and glorified Christ who appeared to Saul of Tarsus. What a scene of light and victory do we see in the resurrection and the ascension. In the light of that, and constrained by the love of Christ, Paul became a Nazarite, and such he remained to the end of his life; wholly separated to God. He blazed out his life on earth spreading the radiancy of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. We may well wax enthusiastic if we in our small way preach Christ and shed forth the light of His glory. But it is well to be reminded that we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

The love of Christ—how sweet it sounds! Where can we find words worthy of such a theme? Once we were amongst the "all" who were dead. But He died for us, and now we live and come under the constraining power of His love. As it lays hold on us—every one, of us from the youngest to the oldest—it alters our lives. Instead of being self-centred, as is so natural to us, we become Christ-centred, and that is the life that makes a mark for God in the world.

The Christ-centred life is what we see in the Apostle Paul. Constrained and controlled by the love of Christ, he no longer lived unto himself but unto Him who died for him and rose again. May God help us also to be true Nazarites, separated unto the Lord, and separated from everything inconsistent with His holy presence.

# PRESERVED AND PERFECTED.

D. ROSS

(1 Thessalonians 5: 23; Hebrews 13: 20, 21)

**Y**OUNG people, who are loyal to Christ, find the world, in which they are, is not an easy place. We, who know the difficulties, are burdened in prayer for you, because the age is not getting better. Judge it by its literature: if there is filth in a book, it will sell. I know nothing of its cinemas except from the pictures outside, and they are lurid enough. It is an age of lust, of impurity, of infidelity: an age without standards, in danger of throwing off all restraint. Can young people be Christian in it? They can, because the God of peace can keep them. If sanctified by the God of **peace**, even in this atomic age, we can be at peace.

What causes dispeace? The first thing is sin. The God of peace has sent His Son, who has made peace with regard to the sin question by the blood of His cross. Then there are our circumstances, which of course are never altogether what we want. Yet in them we may know the peace of God keeping our hearts, and the God of peace dwelling with us.

Again, there are adversaries, of whom the chief is Satan himself. There is a war on from which there is no discharge. Young men and women, you cannot lay off your armour, and you must not allow it to rust. Yet the biggest enemy you have—private enemy No. 1—is SELF. We may adopt that modern phrase, "split personality," for the trouble with many is that there is no harmony and no peace in their lives. If wrong-doing affects the

body, then there is no peace in the body; there is pain. But Paul prays that the God of peace may sanctify us wholly; that is, in every part of our being.

We now come to sanctification—being set apart to God. We may take it up voluntarily, as did the Nazarite, but it is the God of peace who sanctifies us, and will do it completely. There are dangers in connection with this doctrine, for nothing is more miserable than separation for its own sake, when it becomes sanctimoniousness—an obnoxious thing. Some, who think they are sanctified, are simply conceited. I once heard a man say, "I am standing on the pedestal of sanctification." I felt like saying, "You would be far better at the feet of Jesus than standing on a pedestal." The God of peace will make you pure.

Some do not like the big theological terms. Well then, let us substitute the word **purity** for sanctification. When you have dirtied face and hands, you are not happy (after you have passed a certain age) till you have rid yourself of the dirt. To put it very simply, that is what practical sanctification is—keeping yourself pure. It is not easy; there is a lot of dirt about today, but if you are exercised the God of peace will keep you pure. He will **preserve** you spirit, soul and body; for you are a tripartite being.

The body is not a vile thing. It is holy, and you are to keep it holy,

for it is the whole man, the whole woman, that God wants. He wants your body; He wants your soul, the seat of the affections; He wants your spirit, that comes into contact with Himself. All is to be harmonized and preserved by His mighty power till the coming of Jesus. The old theologians used to talk about the **perseverance** of the saints. We believe in that, and that it is God, who so preserves that they do persevere unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when, spirit, soul and body perfected, we shall be in His likeness.

Again in Hebrews 13 we find the God of peace. The God of war—no! I can remember talking to a group of young Germans, who were glorifying Hitler, and I said to them, "You Germans have chosen the god of war, and he will blast you," and truly he has done so. In this country, I am afraid, many have chosen the goddess of lust and pleasure, and she will corrupt them. It is the God of peace you want. The Germans despised peace. They wanted power. But as we see here, this God of peace is the God of **power** as well, for the greatest manifestation of power is seen in the resurrection of Jesus. He is the Great Shepherd in His risen life, and He imparts the might of it to us. What we need, every one of us, is to be living our lives in the power of the risen Christ.

I recently read a book on the early Christian martyrs, and it is really astounding what these people did; things you would have thought impossible to flesh and blood. How did they do it? They lived in the consciousness that Christ is living. Is your Christ only a wonderful Person, who walked the road to

Calvary, treading the steps to the cross? Or is He the living Christ, who is with you, and energizes you, here and now, with the power of His risen life? The resurrection of Christ is God's unit of power.

He is the God of **promise** as well as the God of power. He made the everlasting covenant, and it shall be performed. Indeed, there is no time with God: for Him to promise is for it to be done. This is an age of broken promises in affairs, international, political and business. Men so forget the sanctity of contract, that you cannot believe anybody's covenant. But there are no "scraps of paper" with God, and the guarantee is the blood of the everlasting covenant.

His oath, His covenant, and Blood  
Support me in the whelming flood,  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.

The prayer is that we may be made **perfect** in every good work. The idea here is that of fitting or adjusting. Is that possible? Yes, God's work will be perfected in us. Paul says, he had not yet attained, but he did not sit down and say it could not be done. Rather, he was pressing on. Are you pressing on? If you are set for it, God will work to fit you, and you will get a good way along the road that leads to the perfect day—the endless summer of His presence.

He will perfect us in every good work, not in order that we may make a name for ourselves here, but that we may do His will. God has a **purpose** for every one of us. One of the evils of today is the aimlessness of much of our living. God has a plan and He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Many live lives of pettiness, selfishness, or mere drudgery. God is building a masterpiece, His church in which He is to be glorified throughout the ages. Are you building along that line? Are you working in accordance with the will of God? What a tremendous difference it would make to each if life was consciously linked up with the purpose of God. The result would be **pleasure**. If you are living for pleasure you will never find it. God made you for His pleasure, and in doing His will the highest and truest pleasure is to be found.

Is the love of Christ constraining you? Are you doing things, not merely because you ought to do them, but because your eye is on the

Master, and you want to please Him? Have you realized the purpose of God, and do you want to be in it? There is only one Man, of whom God could say without qualification, "I am well pleased;" and it is only through Him—Jesus Christ our Lord—that we can do that which is well pleasing in God's sight.

Surely we should all do well to make this wonderful **prayer** our own. At the same time we should never forget that the sincerity of our prayer is measured by the degree to which we ourselves are working in unison with God to bring about the answer to it. And now, as in all true prayer, we finish up on the note of **praise** to "Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

## LET US BUILD.

R. A. GALE

(Ephesians 4: 1—16)

**WHEN** we arrived here and were chatting one to another, I introduced myself to a brother, who said, "Oh, yes, Gale from Hull. Was there not a builder of that name round about?" Being in the building line himself, he thought I might be, when we should have had something in common. Well, I was not a builder, nor did I know him. Still it has made the thought of building stick in my mind, and it has pressed on me the more as these meetings have gone on. Now I want to press upon you the need for builders.

We have had a sample of what it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, and there has been ministry of the word of God. What are we going to do about it? What is to be

the real effect? We have been impressed by the fact that youth is the time for decision, and each of us comes from some little circle in some part of this land. We have been "builded together." But what a privilege to be builders—to aim at edification!

I expect some of you will be saying, "It is not easy to build up. It is easy to pull down, and there are all too many who do pull down." So I would like to take that old worthy, Nehemiah, as a sample builder. There were three things about him. First of all he was concerned about the state of the people of God, and he sought to enlist the sympathy of others. Secondly, he sought to stir their spirits as he told them of the

possibility of restoring the place where God had set His name. Thirdly, he challenged them to take their part with him in the great work of building.

There was a little band already in Jerusalem, and he discovered how they were getting on. What part do you play in the little assembly from which you come? When they started to build, one of the first things they did was to repair the sheep gate, through which the sheep were taken for the sacrifices. First of all they made provision for their worship. Have you responded in that way? Is the Lord Jesus so precious to your heart that you respond to His last request, "This do in remembrance of Me"? The Father seeks worshippers in spirit and in truth.

Let us be very practical. How can you play your part as a brother—a sister? First of all, you will go to the meetings: you will be there. You will take your place not only on the Lord's Day, but at the prayer meeting and the Bible reading. You will support those who preach the Gospel, and in every way you will seek to fit in and build. Nehemiah was so concerned that he not only mourned and wept, but he prayed and he also acted. These things follow in sequence. Oh that we might be so constrained by the love of Christ that we reach the point of acting!

Like Nehemiah, I wish to enlist your sympathies, so that for the love of Christ we might be builders. Most of us are in business, but so was Nehemiah, and he had risen to some eminence. Now business may become a snare, but I think Nehemiah would have approved the story

about the shoemaker, who said that his business was to serve the Lord, and he cobbled shoes to pay expenses. Not that we are to give up business, but that our lives are to be lived to the glory of our Lord. Play a brother's part, a sister's part, in the circle in which you move.

Let not thy hands be slack,  
Live not in vain.  
Out on life's lonely track  
Folk live in pain.  
Play thou a brother's part,  
Strength, love and hope impart,  
Bid thou the fainting heart  
Look up again.

Secondly, Nehemiah told them of God's good hand upon him to fire their imagination. In our sojourn here we have had enough surely to stir our spirits individually, and to make us realize the scope and purpose of the Gospel—that we should play our part in a corporate way. That is why I read the passage in Ephesians 4. There we see that wonderful structure, the church of God—His habitation through the Spirit, and the body of Christ—functioning as God intended it should. Of that we form a part, and we see how its edification, or upbuilding, is connected with "that which every joint supplieth." Every part is vital because connected with the living Head in heaven, from whom is to be drawn all that we need. Oh that the Spirit of God might so work in us that there may be the response for which He looks!

Nehemiah called for a response. There was much opposition. Many were grieved that a man had come who cared for God's interests, and to the last there were those who in differing ways sought to divert him. He refused to be diverted. He would not compromise. He withstood them,

stuck to his work; and how effective he was!

Let not thy hands be slack,  
Grip thou thy sword.  
Why should'st thou courage lack?  
Think of thy Lord.  
Did He not die for thee;  
Stronger than all is He,  
And He thy strength will be;  
Rest on His word.

Lastly, Nehemiah challenged them and said, "Let us build." So effective was his challenge that they joined him. May our hearts be challenged, so that our lives are dedicated to His service, each fitting into his place,

if only in a simple way. That is the thing that matters, every joint supplying its part, not something spectacular. You cannot do my work, and I cannot do yours, and if either of us fail, the whole body suffers. If, on the other hand, we are properly in function, we edify, and what a privilege it is to build up!

Let not thy hands be slack,  
Haste to the fray.  
Dream not of turning back,  
Life is not play.  
Gird thou thy armour on,  
Work till the building's done,  
Then shall the Lord's well done,  
More than repay.

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

H. WILSON

(Psalm 16: 11)

**T**HE nearer we get to the end of these meetings the more I feel the importance of true devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Personally, I realize things cannot go on as they have been: I want there to be a change, in myself first of all, so that we may love the Lord more, be more devoted to Him, and so help on with the building we have been hearing about. Many more, I am sure, are feeling the same.

Here are two suggestions that will lead to this end. We must have a conscience that is tender, and we should cultivate intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ. The first of these is negative and the other positive: they are distinct yet they run together. An old man in the Congo told me he had not committed any sin, because he had not committed murder. His conscience was as hard and knotted as his hands. There are many people in this country who

use a pretty broad measure for their consciences, though not as broad as that of the old Congo native. If we want to follow the Lord, we must clear the conscience of what will hinder our intercourse with Him.

Six years ago, when on furlough, I made the acquaintance of a little girl in Scotland. Every now and then she would be found hiding under a table, and when her parents saw her there they knew she had been up to mischief. She was brought out, she had to confess, and after that communion with her parents was restored, and she was happy. There was something quite commendable in what she did. It showed she had a tender conscience, though sometimes there was really nothing to punish her for. Loving her parents, she was uncomfortable if she thought there was anything to hinder its outflow. I trust we may be uncomfortable if we do anything that will

hinder intercourse with our Lord.

So I would urge you younger people to seek greater intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ. I will give you a little piece of advice—practice on your parents. I am sure your parents would be delighted if you drew a little closer to them, showing them that you love them. You may find it difficult, but it is good to tell them. When I was a boy I was very close to my parents. But when I grew up, the eldest of nine children, I began to feel they did not love me as they used to. What folly that was! You may think they are a little bit harsh sometimes, but if you draw nearer to them you will find out their love. So show your parents that you love them, help them in self-denial, and never doubt their love for you.

Now, if you can treat your parents like that, how much more so the Lord Jesus Christ. Never misjudge

His love, for He died for us, He rose again, and He lives for us as Intercessor at God's right hand. We may have to go Him sometimes in shame and confession, but we know His love. We may have to confess things which the world would not call evil, but then our standard is not the standard of the world. Confessing them, the broken intercourse is restored, and happiness regained. As we are drawn to Him, we shall be drawn together, and build together.

Then there is the conflict of which we have heard, and of which we read earlier in the Psalms. We can face it boldly if we come boldly to the throne of grace, maintaining unbroken intimacy with the loving Saviour who ever lives. The longer I live the more I am satisfied that the greatest pleasure and joy is found in seeking unbroken intimacy with Him.

## SERVING AND WAITING.

F. B. HOLE

(1 Thessalonians 1: 9, 10)

**T**HESSE words were written to young Christians—first century converts—by the Apostle Paul, the greatest evangelist of all time. We, who are assembled here, are mainly young Christians—twentieth century converts—but what was true for them then is true for us today. The Apostle went back to the beginning of things, when they turned to God from idols. At the end of the verse he went on to the glorious finish, when God's Son will be revealed from heaven. But between he indicated what is intended to fill the interim for each and all of us. In

the past we were converted; in the future we are to meet the Son of God from heaven; between we are to serve the living and true God and wait with expectancy. There is the serving and there is the waiting; and if we close our meetings on this note it may be profitable for us.

“Ye turned to God from idols,” this is what really constitutes conversion. Again, you see, first the positive, then the negative. If we turn to God, we must of necessity turn from the idols that once charmed and enslaved us. Why did

these people turn to God? Some of them undoubtedly were Jews, whose forefathers had been frightened and turned away from Him at Sinai. They turned to Him because He had been made known to them in Jesus Christ our Lord, rather than in the earthquake and thunders of Sinai. We have turned to him for just the same reason.

We know that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," and all was so perfect that Jesus Himself could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." God has become delightful in our eyes—everything that is beautiful. Some people mistakenly think that Jesus is the embodiment of all that is gracious and kind, but that God is so awesome that they cannot think of Him with any peace of mind. The truth is, in seeing Jesus we are seeing God manifested. We see His heart—His love and His holiness.

In turning to God, we turn from idols. These Thessalonians turned from the idols of the heathen world with all its unclean practices and evils. How do **we** turn from idols? Well, what is an idol? It is anything that usurps in the heart of man the supreme place that belongs alone to the Creator. Idolize nothing, for God alone must be sanctified in your heart and mine. The danger with us is that we may grow cold, and then things that we idolized before our conversion begin to reassert their power over us. Many of us have seen with sorrow a young believer, who made so bright a start a few years before, grow cold; love for the Saviour wanes and the old idols reassert themselves with enslaving power. Let us see to it that conver-

sion is a reality with us, and that the things that once inspired our devotion—not necessarily evil things—have no place in our hearts and minds.

Our journey terminates at the coming of God's Son from heaven. He is our Deliverer from the wrath, that will be ushered in when He is revealed. **Wrath is coming.** Many would say, "You don't believe in that, do you?" I should have to reply that looking on the earth as it is today, I could believe in nothing else. Such shocking evils fill the earth that sinful men are moved to wrath and punishment against them. I could understand any right-minded man, who knows nothing of Scripture, saying, "If there is not a Power in the universe to intervene and break the evil, there ought to be!" We know there is a God of everlasting righteousness and truth, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the appointed Executor of the wrath of God, and at the same time the Deliverer of His people. Knowing the blessedness of conversion to God from idols, you have the assurance that Jesus is your Deliverer from the wrath to come.

But my point more particularly is that which is to fill up the interim. Our life is to be one of serving and waiting. The serving of something or somebody characterizes everybody. The men of the world mainly serve their own lusts and passions, and in so doing they are really serving the great adversary himself. We are called to serve the living and true God, and there are ways in great variety in which we may do so. If we are devoted to God, and His will is supreme with us, we shall be led by Him into the service that he

pleases, while we tread our way to glory. The world and its lust pass away, and it is he that does the will of God who abides for ever. We serve the **living** God, who notes every item of service rendered to Him, and will ultimately reward it.

Then, we wait for the advent of the Deliverer. For thousands of years men have been scheming to produce an ideal state of things in the world, and they are scheming still. They never have reached it, and they never will. We know that, and so we do not join in the scheming, and the contention and strife that it brings. Instead of that we wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus. He only has the power that can subdue the devil himself, the originator of sin in God's fair creation. He did it in one way at His first advent by His death and resurrection; He will do it in another way at His second advent, when He will bind the devil and deliver the groaning earth. He will deliver His church by removing it to heaven.

Some of you may be thinking that this talk about the Advent sprang to life during the first great war, that it resulted in "Advent Testimony," and other movements, but that it has not come to very much. Well, I can go back much further and remember extravagant notions of more than fifty years ago, and extravagant guesses as to the mystic number 666 in the Revelation, just as many of us remember with sorrow extravagant advertisements in the daily papers, not so many years ago, making predictions as to a near date for the Advent, all of which came to nothing. It is a sad fact that earnest Christians may become unbalanced, and forget that the pendulum of

God's great clock of the universe swings with majestic slowness. God marches across the ages, and is never in a hurry.

Yet, that Christ is coming is a certain fact of revelation. The attempt to fix a date is a forbidden, and therefore a fruitless thing, but I venture to believe that His coming is drawing very near. We are asked sometimes whether we can produce any evidence from Scripture to support such a belief. So I will give very briefly three Scriptural reasons for my belief that such is the case.

Glance first at the Lord's own words in Luke 21: 27-31. His allusion to the fig tree is said to be a parable. Now parabolically the fig tree alludes to Israel. "All the trees," would indicate the many other nations surrounding that people. A revival of nationality in Israel and the peoples is a sign that the summer of His visible presence is near. We do undoubtedly see just that revival of nationality today. Racial feelings have been roused to the utmost, and the Jew is stirring as never before.

Then there is 2 Timothy 3: 1-5. The people described here are not atheists nor agnostics, for they have a form of godliness. They are folk with Christian profession, yet really lovers of their own selves, of money and of pleasures. The state of Christendom today could not be more accurately described than by these words. It is a case of, "We're all doing it." Everybody out for themselves or their class, for money and pleasure. Let us all see to it that we are not entangled, and much less engulfed by these things. But notice, this is to be in "the last

days." The inference surely is that **we are in the last days.**

Thirdly, there is 2 Peter 3: 3, 4. Here we have the prediction that a time will come when men will scoff at the idea of a second Advent on the ground that nothing catastrophic has ever happened, or ever will, since everything proceeds by evolutionary changes so small as to be imperceptible—I am just trying to state this prediction in the language of today. They are willingly ignorant that there has been in the past the catastrophic intervention of God by means of the flood. Once admit that, and the theory of evolution, by such imperceptible stages that it can neither be proved or disproved, would collapse. The second Advent has provoked the scoffers for many a day, but only during the last half

century or so have the scoffers scoffed because of their theory of evolution. And the time when they will so scoff is stated to be "the last days." Again the inference is—**we are now in the last days.**

Young people, go from these meetings with serious thoughts of the coming again of the Lord Jesus, and don't fritter away the years that may remain to you. Many things point to the fact that we draw near to the moment when He will again intervene in the affairs of this earth. His coming means glory to us, but it also means the closing of the day of grace. God give us to be filled with zeal to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, who will deliver us from the wrath by calling us into His presence for ever.

## "The Small Rain."

(Deut. 32: 2)

Many miss the charming influences of heavenly truth because **they do not think enough.** How often does the word fail to enrich the heart because it is not thought over! The small rain does not get to the root of the tender herb, for time and opportunity are not allowed to it. Oh you that would profit by the ministry of the gospel, take this for your golden rule—Hear once, meditate twice, and pray three times! I prescribe to you as a composition and compound of excellent virtue, that there should be at least twice as much meditating as there should be hearing. Is it not strange that people should think sermons worth hearing, but not meditating upon? It is as foolish as if a man thought a joint of meat worth buying, but not worth cooking; for meditation is, as it were, a sort of holy cookery by which the truth is prepared to be food for the soul. Solomon says: "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting," and, verily, there are many of that sort, who hunt after a sermon, and when they have found it they roast it not, they do not prepare it as truth should be prepared ere it can be digested and become spiritual meat.

(SPURGEON).

# A STRIKING CONTRAST.

A. J. POLLOCK

**T**HERE is a very vivid contrast between the manner of our Lord's entrance into this world, and His exit from it; a contrast that is full of interest for Christian meditation.

Our Lord's entrance into the world was marked by great humiliation. We read the touching words, "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself (Phil. 2: 8). He was of David's lineage and was born King of the Jews. He might have been born in a royal palace, and that would have been a wonderful condescension for Him, who was and is the eternal Son in the unity of the Godhead, and as born into this world was described prophetically as "The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Isa. 9: 6). For what is the measure that we can use? How can we compare the INFINITE with the finite, the CREATOR with the creature? No mathematician can calculate the distance. No measuring yard is available here.

Our Lord was born of a virgin, begotten by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit of God. His entrance into this world was in a stable, and His first resting place was a manger. In such circumstances occurred this unique event in the history of the world.

In order that He should be born at Bethlehem, the whole of the Roman world was to be taxed. The proud Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, little thought when he set in motion all the machinery to bring this taxing about that it was to fulfil the Scripture, "But thou, Bethle-

hem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5: 2). In that prophecy, seven centuries and more before the birth of our Lord, we have presented to us His manhood, the place of His birth, and also the careful assertion of His deity.

The evangelist tells us that there was no room for the couple from Nazareth in the inn. Doubtless at the time of the census the inn would be crowded with guests, and the only available place for the Galilean carpenter, Joseph, and Mary, his wife, was the stable with the cattle. The innkeeper would regard them as the humblest of the humble. But it appeals to us that the Saviour of mankind was born in a stable. The manner of His entrance into this sad world was ordered of God. Is not His humble entrance into this world a rebuke to the pride and pomp of man?

The first persons to hear the wonderful news of the Saviour's birth were not the great people of the land, the high priests and rulers, but humble shepherds tending their flocks by night. There must have been something morally great about these shepherds to be chosen for such wonderful news. Again the pride of man is rebuked.

But what of heaven? What did heaven think of this event? The angel of the Lord was sent to tell the shepherds. We have instances in Scripture where angels appeared just

as men, so as not to excite astonishment in those to whom they appeared. But in this case the glory of the Lord appeared to the shepherds. That glory must have been wonderful, surpassing anything of earth, so much so that the shepherds were sore afraid. Bidden not to fear, they were told that that day in the city of David was born a Saviour, which was Christ, the Lord.

In an instant there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, crying aloud, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2: 14).

What a contrast to the stable and the holy Babe in a manger! Heaven interested in such fashion. When children of royal parents are born there are salutes of guns to celebrate the great event. But was there ever a child saluted like this heavenly Child was?

On the other hand sinister influences were at work. Months later the wise men of the east came with their offerings to the holy Child, and to give Him worship. Why should Herod be troubled and all Jerusalem with him? We can see Satanic influence in all this, for he is a master of mass psychology.

Thus we see three things. (1) The lowly birth of our Lord, appealing to the renewed mind of the Christian very powerfully; (2) Heaven's supreme delight in the event; (3) Satan's dismay passed on to Herod and all Jerusalem.

And so we see Heaven's delight following the activities of our Lord in all His earthly life, and Satanic hatred plotting against Him. But till

His hour came, our Lord, though plotted against, moved on His way of testimony and blessing. No indignity was allowed to touch His holy Person. It is true that when our Lord pointed out the grace of God passing by the children of Israel, blessing a poor Gentile widow of Sarepta, and a Gentile leper, Naaman, the Syrian, such was the heart of man that they sought to cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill whereon their city was built. But "He passing through the midst of them went His way" (Luke 4: 30). Then again, following the wonderful miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the Pharisees were so jealous for their lifeless religion that, "From that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death" (John 11: 53). But they could not act for His hour was not yet come.

But at last that hour drew nigh. "When Jesus knew that His hour was come" (John 13: 1), He drew His disciples together in the upper room, and there instituted the remembrance of Himself in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup. Henceforth His speech was with His own, till they were found in the Garden of Gethsemane. Then the multitude, guided by the arch-betrayer, Judas, arrived with lanterns and torches and weapons. Our Lord questioned them, "Whom seek ye?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." Our Lord answered, "I AM." In our Bible "he" is put in italics, showing the word is not in the original. Was our Lord's answer not the assertion of His glorious Deity? We believe it was.

Now follows a most extraordinary

spectacle. With one accord the band of ruffians fell **backward** to the ground. Most people, who fall, fall **forward**. But here not one but **all** fell backward. Surely in this we see the fact that the Lord was immune from personal violence as long as His hour had not arrived. Here at the very close of this period we find Him invulnerable.

Again He asks the question, "Whom seek ye?" Again, in spite of this sharp warning, they answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." This time He answered, "I AM," but added, "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way," referring to His loved disciples; in other words, He placed Himself in their hands, saying, "This is YOUR hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22: 53).

At once things are different. His enemies are allowed to spit in His holy face, to pluck the hair off His cheek, to place the cruel crown of thorns on His holy brow, to press the reed of mock sovereignty in His hand, to clothe Him in a scarlet robe, kneeling with Satanic hate in their hearts, saying in cruel mockery, "Hail, King of the Jews." For three-and-a-half years He had not suffered bodily harm, here it is allowed in all the frenzied cruelty of man.

Above and beyond all, they crucified Him. Man did his worst against heaven's best. They flung God's gesture of love and mercy back into His face. Yet how wonderful it is to see God's hand in it all. God forsook His Son in His darkest hour inasmuch as "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon

Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53: 5).

But as soon as our Lord cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost, everything changes as regards what men were permitted to do. With the exception of the soldier piercing His side in the fulfilment of Scripture, **none touched the Lord after His death save those that loved Him.**

Look at the contrast. Our Lord was born in a stable and cradled in a manger, yet He was buried in a rich man's tomb. Centuries before came the prophecy of Isaiah 53: 9. This verse is translated in an obscure manner. A clearer rendering of it is as follows, "And [men] appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death" (Darby's New Translation).

Where would the malefactors be buried? They would be flung without ceremony into the murderer's corner, and in the ordinary course of events our Lord's sacred body would have been subjected to the same indignities. But Heaven would not permit this. Between the incident in the Garden, and His crucifixion, men were allowed to do as they willed. But now His work finished; Heaven intervenes.

Joseph of Arimathæa, a secret believer, at the very time when we should expect him to be still more secret, came out in the open, threw aside his timidity and boldly asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate, who had quailed before the frenzied cries of the fanatical Jews, now showed his authority by giving leave to

Joseph to bury the body of our Lord. Another secret believer, Nicodemus, likewise threw his timidity to the winds, and assisted Joseph in his task of love and affection. So was fulfilled the Scripture that He should make His grave with the rich.

All other accounts of His appearances, the forty days our Lord was on this earth between His resurrection and ascension, show that only His loved ones saw Him, to be impressed with His love and power. Surely we cannot but feel how great the contrast between His lowly birth and pathway, culminating in all the dishonour that men in their wickedness put upon Him, and the honour put upon Him by those who saw Him, loved Him, adored Him, worshipped Him after His resurrection.

There is a meaning in all this. God

has said His last word of grace in the presentation of His beloved Son to men and in His wondrous cross and resurrection. Could more be said? Surely not. God allows the testimony of the Gospel to that to hold the field to-day, and He has no further or fuller word to add to those words of grace.

Men are asking to-day, Why does God keep silence and not intervene? But **when He speaks next it will be in JUDGMENT.** Then will be fulfilled the Scripture, "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. 1: 7). Today it is the silence of God, and the lengthening out of His day of mercy; when He speaks again it will be a matter of government, and who then shall stand?

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## THE MOUNTAIN AND THE VALLEY. D. Ross

Notes of an address on Mark 9: 1—9, 14—29; 2 Peter 1: 15—18.

**I**T is a very blessed experience indeed when the Lord Jesus Christ takes us apart and we realize that we are in the Holy Mount, but as we read about the Apostle Peter we find him very similar to ourselves. There are mountain tops of wonderful experience, but there are the valley bottoms as well. Just before this there was the wonderful confession of Peter when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There he reached a lofty peak in the appreciation of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, but we find him down in

the valley immediately after, because when the Lord speaks to him of the cross, he says, "Lord pity Thyself"; and the very Lord, who had just commended Peter, and told him he was blessed, has to rebuke him and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

The Lord Jesus Christ was confirming the faith of His disciples, who had been so utterly shocked by the message of the cross. So in order that Peter and the others might be prepared to face the offence of the cross, they were given to see in

miniature the coming kingdom, in power and glory, of our Lord Jesus Christ. This incident, which we have read, is a confirmation of the faith of the disciples, and more, is the Divine attestation of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus.

But now I want to bring before you two great contrasts: the mountain-top with the **vision** and the **voice**, and the valley-bottom with **vice** in all its forms and yet a glorious **victory**. We have on the mountain-top one side of the Christian life, and we have in the valley-bottom another side. And while Peter could not at the same time be physically on the mountain-top and in the valley-bottom, it is possible for us to be in both spheres, as the words of the hymn put it:—

“Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day  
Nor leave our sweet retreat.”

So **communion** and **conflict** may go together. We may go forth and serve the Lord, and contend earnestly for Him, and face all the bitter conflict and the antagonism of the devil, and yet we need not leave our sweet retreat, because we can carry with us a sense of the Father's presence even in the scene of conflict.

On the mountain-top there is the Father and His only Son, and we are permitted just to view the mystery of the Divine Son communing with the Divine Father, and then that marvellous transfiguration taking place. But down in the valley there is another father and another only son. The Divine Father and the Divine Son on the top have their thoughts and counsel concerning the other son down at the bottom where the broken-hearted father is in absolute despair.

Jesus took these three men apart into a high mountain to pray, and it is good for us to go apart, either actually where it is possible or even by abstracting ourselves in the midst of a busy world. Now it is quite in keeping with Luke's Gospel where the Lord Jesus Christ is brought before us as the perfect, the ideal, the typical Man, that over and over again you find Him in prayer. If you look at it from that point, what do you find? He is transfigured. And if we knew more about the communion of prayer it would be seen in our faces. Would that we all knew more of the glory of the transfiguration, because the word is used of saints by the Apostle Paul, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed;” that is, transfigured. With Him it was a miniature of His Divine glory, but with us there can be the transfiguration in our lives and this can be seen even in our faces.

He was Divine, and these men waking from sleep had a vision of His glory. Oh, what a countenance that was, as the sun shining in its strength! He, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, had taken upon Him the form of a servant, but there through His garments shone forth His Deity. His raiment was white and glistening, whiter than any fuller on earth could ever whiten it; whiter than the spotless snow that lay upon Hermon. Nothing on earth can ever compare with the spotless purity of the excellent glory that shines in the face and Person of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we have a miniature of the Kingdom because the Lord is not alone. We have Moses: he is typical

of those who pass through the article of death, and we have loved ones that have gone through the article of death, but we sorrow not as those who have no hope because we know they will come with Him in His glory. And then there is Elias, who saw the chariot of fire and went up triumphantly by the whirlwind, typical of those in a coming day who will not see death, but will be changed and caught up into His presence. Then there were those who stood on earth, typical of the earthly saints in that coming glory. So here is a miniature of the Kingdom, and Jesus is the centre of it all.

Here, too, is the pattern of all God's ways upon earth: of the law—Moses the giver of that law—and the spirit of the law enforced in the prophets, and Elias typical of that. But the law and the prophets were eclipsed. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets"—Moses and Elias, and all the others—"has spoken to us in His Son." Here is the apex, here is the climax, here is the final revelation of God, who formerly spake through Moses, and spake through Elias and the prophets.

I want you to notice the theme of their conversation. Luke tells us, "They appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." The word "decease" is "exodus." Moses had a wonderful exodus, put to sleep and buried by the hand of God. The old Jewish tradition (it may be poetry, but it is a beautiful thought) said, "God kissed His servant Moses to sleep and buried him there on lonely Mount Nebo." And Elijah, what kind of exodus had he? You remem-

ber, fleeing before the face of an angry woman, he flung himself under a juniper bush and said in effect, "Lord, I have been a failure, my mission has been a failure, let me die." Yet the man who wanted to die like a hunted fugitive went to heaven—that was a glorious exodus—accompanied by a chariot of fire. But how did Jesus go out? Oh, that is a sight to melt the hardest heart—not kissed to sleep so to speak by God, not going out accompanied by hosts that men can see, but dying outside the walls of Jerusalem on a malefactor's gibbet, spat upon, His face so marred—look at it!

"Thou countenance transcendent!  
Thou life-creating Sun!  
To worlds on Thee dependent—  
Yet bruised and spit upon."

That was the manner of His exodus.

They spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Poets and philosophers do not like to speak of that today; they do not want the bloody sweat; they do not want the crown of thorns; they want something different. But the day is coming when it will not be only five people there, but a host that no man can number, worshipping the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who has prevailed. Oh, what a hallelujah chorus that will be, and their theme, **HIS EXODUS** in that day! That is why I find it so blessed—and have for many, many long years—to meet with my brethren every Sunday morning and think of His exodus—the bread, His body given in death for us; the cup, His blood poured forth for us. Is that a waste of time? It is communion, fellowship, and the contemplation of His exodus, and all the glory that has followed and will yet follow.

What was the effect on Peter? He was astounded and his thoughts were confused. He said, "It is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles." But this spiritual ecstasy had to pass. A father and his boy were waiting down in the valley and there was a cross waiting in Jerusalem. This glory scene cannot be permanent yet. And then Peter made another mistake; "one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias, for he wist not what to say." He was doing what many people today are doing, putting the Lord Jesus Christ on the same platform as other great men. It is not enough to say He is the greatest and fairest of men: He is fairer than all the children of men. Why? Because He is the Son of God, unique, eternal and absolute. It is a mistake, a tragic mistake to put Him even alongside Moses and Elias. God will not have it, and Moses and Elias disappear on the cloud.

Matthew tells us it was a **bright** cloud. What kind of clouds do we usually see? Dark clouds. What does a cloud do? It conceals. What did this cloud do? It revealed. What was it? I believe it was the Shekinah glory of God. A bright luminous cloud overshadowed them, hiding Moses and Elias and leaving Jesus visible alone. The poet has said, "God, dark with excess of light!" Do you know what excessive light would do to you? If you were to gaze on the sun with the naked eye just for a few seconds it would blind you; the light is blinding light. Light reveals; light conceals; and that great, bright, luminous cloud overshadowed them—it was the glory of God—and they heard a voice. What

do we need today? The **vision** and the **voice**.

Our generation is perishing for these two things—A VISION OF GOD. Our generation has had such a vision of its own greatness and cleverness that even the veriest ignoramus of a child boasts of knowledge in the present day; they have a vision of the capabilities of man in his philosophy and science. What is his science going to do? Blast civilisation.\* It was not a very serious-minded man that said, "Science without sense spells ruin," but it is true. What does true science do? It brings in **God**. Our generation is needing the vision of God, and it is needing to **hear a voice saying**, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM." People are ready to hear everybody and anybody except the voice of Jesus. Why, you have got some of these clever people, young as well as old, who set themselves out to criticise Jesus instead of hearing His voice. "This is my beloved Son, hear Him."

What happened to the disciples? Consternation seized them and they fell on their faces; they were sore afraid. The glory of the Lord does make us afraid until something happens. Matthew tells us, "Jesus came and touched them," and there is comfort in His touch. The world is full of fear today. Perhaps some of you are full of fear at what is going to happen in the earth; some are afraid at the thought of disaster; some — even Christians — have a lingering fear of the thought of entering into the presence of a Holy God. The Lord Jesus Christ draws near to you with the comfort of His

\* This address was given in 1938. [Editor.]

touch. And they looked round about and "they saw no man any more, save JESUS ONLY." That brings joy; that drives fear out of our hearts; to get the vision in our souls of the glory, and to have resounding within our being the melody of His blessed voice.

Yet He had to die, not because of anything in Him, but because down below there was a devil-ridden boy and a broken-hearted father, and He had consecrated Himself to Calvary's Cross. Down the mountain side went the Son of God into the valley of conflict, and what did He find there? People squabbling, quibbling, questioning, criticising! Brethren, are we not sometimes like the scribes?—and what a withering effect it has upon us! A heated argument was going on, and what was it about? A poor boy, and all their arguing effected nothing. There was a conflict, too—a conflict between man and the mighty forces of the devil who had this poor little boy in his grasp. Jesus called them, "O faithless generation!" What was lacking? Faith

Many of us may have sought to help such a boy, in the Sunday School and in our own home perhaps, but what was lacking? The father said, "Lord, if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, the "If Thou canst," is "If thou canst believe;" that is, in effect, "It is not a question of whether I can, it is a question of whether you can." "If thou canst believe all things are possible." This produced the cry, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

Is not that the experience of most

of us? What a tremendous amount of unbelief has been mixed up with our belief; and we can only say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." Then the power of the Lord was put forth, anticipating the mighty victory of the Cross, and victories won since, when He has set free those who were oppressed by the devil, and were without strength and evil. John tells us in his epistle that, "the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," and Mark's Gospel shows us how He did it. The devil fought hard, and they said, "the boy is dead," but Jesus delivered him and gave him to his father.

May this encourage the Sunday School worker, father, mother, teacher. You have a boy in your class, or a girl, perhaps one of your own children, and they are not the Lord's, and they are not following in the way you would like. What are you to do? You bring them to Jesus, but there are three causes of failure indicated here. There was a lack of faith; there was a lack of prayer, and there was a lack of fasting.

Do some say, We do not fast nowadays? So much the worse for us. What is fasting? It is a voluntary doing without. It is not fasting from food merely—although that might be a good thing for us—but a voluntary doing without things that in their own place are right enough. I wonder how much we know of that! How much did the Lord know? He was willing to give up everything for the redemption of the lost. May God give us in larger measure the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

He has set us free to serve Him,

and free to serve others. And if in that service we have failed, as all of us must confess, we must put it down to the lack of three things, FAITH, PRAYER, FASTING, but thank God He can give us the victory. He wrought a mighty victory on that day, and He handed the boy whole and well to his father. And you and I can carry out our Christian life and any little bit of service, entrusted to us, in the power of His victory. He gives overcoming grace, and He

helps us to fulfil these conditions that are needed for victory.

Shall we pray to know more of the **vision**, shall our ears and our souls be attuned to catch the music of His **voice**, God's voice, hearing Him? Then if that is the case we can go forth and serve Him in a world that is full of **vice** and wickedness, and we shall know through our Lord Jesus Christ the **victory** that He gives.

## JOY IN GOD.

J. HOUSTON

**I**T is instructive to note, in the Epistle to the Romans, the various stages through which the apostle leads us, till he brings us at length to the climax, which we find in chapter 5: 11—joying in God. Of necessity, this must be the summit, for we cannot possibly have anything higher. As another has said, "Higher joy than this we cannot have."

In opening his Epistle, he shows the sinful and utterly corrupt state of man. Under the law, the Jew failed; without the law, the Gentile plunged into the most shocking state of licentiousness. Both are indicted, and found guilty before God. "All have sinned," and "the wages of sin is death."

When we see sinful man at the bar of Divine justice, pronounced guilty, and that by God Himself, it might well cause a terrible shudder to pass through us, a dreadful fear

to possess us, for there we see our own state, as condemned sinners.

But God brings in redemption, and the whole scene changes at once for the redeemed. We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (chap. 3: 24-26). How redemption changes everything for sinners! Apart from redemption, God can but judge the sinner. And who can enter into judgment with God, and stand before Him? But by redemption He can come to the sinner as Saviour, not as Judge. What a change!

How our hearts may leap and

bound for joy at the thought of God coming to us as Saviour, and taking up our whole case in the light of His own righteousness; and not only saving us from the terrible consequences of sin, but even justifying us—clearing us absolutely from all guilt, and fitting us for His holy presence and, in doing this, remaining righteous, perfectly righteous.

In chap. 4 the apostle shows that justification is on the principle of faith without works. To possess it on such terms well suits condemned sinners, who are precluded from doing any works. What can a condemned sinner do by way of saving himself from death? What could the dying thief on the cross do by way of saving himself from death? Death had already opened its mouth, and was about to swallow him, when the Saviour intervened. He was but a brand plucked from the burning. So we all are, every one of us. We repeat, it is a blessed way for sinners to appropriate salvation, by simply believing on the Lord Jesus.

The whole of chap. 4 is an argument showing that sinners are saved by faith, and not of works. This argument is based upon the precedents of Abraham and David, the two great roots of Old Testament promise. They were justified by God on the principle of faith, without works, in their own day; and the same principle is laid down for our justification at the present time.

In chap. 5 the apostle takes up the believer, as being justified by faith. On this ground, he has peace with God, and access by faith into grace, or favour, where he now

stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. From this point the apostle rises in the ascending scale of blessings, and enumerates a whole series of things that lead up to the peak, namely, **Joy in God**. So that the believer not only glories in tribulation, but has untold joy in God Himself. He has the love of God shed in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given to him; is perfectly reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and joys in God in blessed nearness to Him, and in sweetest communion with Him.

What a marvellous work is redemption! How perfectly it reveals God in all His infinite resource of grace through Christ Jesus! The glory of God is displayed in redemption in a way which transcends our highest thoughts. We are apt to think of redemption as it affects us, in the relief it brings to us, saving us from our sins, and delivering us from the power of the enemy. And however blessed it is to view this side, that is, our side of redemption, it comes far short of what it is to God. When we come to have real joy in God, we then realize what He has gained in the great work of redemption, through Christ Jesus, His beloved Son. Joy in Him is just sharing that which He possesses, in infinite fulness.

When the prodigal son was clothed with the best robe, and seated at the feast of love in the father's presence, the word there was, "Rejoice with Me." The father's joy at what had been accomplished in infinite grace, was the theme of the father's house. This truly is joy in God, and it is our portion now and for all eternity.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION. F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 17: 1—18: 4)

CHAPTERS 17 and 18 give us with full details the judgment of Babylon. We shall find it helpful to read chapter 21: 9—22: 5, by way of contrast. Having done this, we shall note that in both cases the vision is introduced by one of the angels who had the vials, and that what is seen is figured as a woman and as a city. The similarity ceases with this: all else is in sharpest contrast. There we view "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" here, "the great whore." There we have the true church, loved by Christ, redeemed and cleansed by Him, under the symbol of a city. Here we have the false religious system, which claims to be the church, also under the symbol of a city.

Babylon played a considerable part in Old Testament history. It was founded in defiance of God, as Genesis 11 shows; and the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was there. It was also the fountain head of the idolatry that overspread the earth after the flood. This is indicated in such a verse as Jeremiah 51: 7, and historical records seem to corroborate it. Very appropriately therefore the mystical Babylon of our chapter symbolizes the harlot "church" centred in Rome, which has been in the present age "a golden cup . . . that made all the earth drunken." After the true church is gone all that is Laodicean, and spued out of Christ's mouth, will gravitate to Rome, we believe, so that the mystical Babylon will represent the sum total of apostate Christendom.

John is called by the angel to see

the judgment of the great whore "that sitteth upon many waters." In the Old Testament Israel in her apostasy is treated as an adulterous wife, because she had been brought nationally into an established relationship with Jehovah. The church is espoused to Christ "as a chaste virgin" (2 Cor. 11: 2), with the marriage day still in the future; hence the false church, wholly allied with the world, is with accuracy called not an adulteress, but a whore. She "sitteth upon," that is, dominates "many waters," which in verse 15 is explained as "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." She practices unbridled worldliness, in order to become the mistress of the masses of mankind. In keeping with this, verse 2 shows the kings of the earth seduced by her, and the inhabitants of the earth intoxicated by her wiles.

John is carried in spirit into a wilderness to see this great sight of the woman, riding the beast that he had previously seen in the vision of chapter 13. No colour is mentioned in that chapter, but in chapter 12 the dragon who gives his power to the beast is spoken of as red. Here we find the colour, which denotes the glory of this world, characterizing not only Satan but the revived Roman Empire, and apostate Christendom, which for the moment is exercising control over the empire.

Of the three, the woman presents the most gorgeous spectacle. She has in addition the imperial purple, since for this brief moment she seems to have attained the object for which

she has always striven—recognized sovereignty over the nations. Gold, precious stones and pearls are elsewhere symbolic of all that is beautiful and of God, but here she is “decked,” or “gilded” with them. All is superficial, and these things, excellent in themselves, are perverted to base uses. Similarly the cup in her hand is golden, as may be seen viewing it externally, but internally full of filthiness. The sin of the Pharisee was similar, as we see in Luke 11: 39, but here it is carried to its highest pitch of iniquity.

Her name, however, was carried on her forehead so as to be visible to every eye. The first word, “Mystery,” instructs us that “Babylon the Great” is not to be understood in a literal, but in a mystical or symbolic sense. All the principles of evil that first sprang up in the literal Babylon of ancient days are found in their most virulent form in this abominable system. It has been said very truly that in Scripture symbolism a system is represented by a woman, whilst the power or energy marking a system is represented by a man.

The Romish system, enlarged by the inclusion in it of all that is corrupt in Christendom after the church is gone, is represented by the woman here. She has become “the mother of harlots and abominations;” that is, the source of lesser yet similar systems of corruption, when she should have been the “chaste virgin” for Christ. How fearful is this charge laid against her! Notice too how the word “earth” occurs frequently here. We have had it twice in verse 2. It occurs again in verses 8 and 18, and

also several times in the next chapter. Earthly religion is her stock in trade.

In Philippians 3, Paul reveals how he entered experimentally into the heavenly calling made known in Christ, but before the chapter closes he mentions certain “enemies of the cross of Christ,” and he states of these, “whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” The system that the woman represents may boast of “apostolic succession:” they have succession indeed, but not apostolic. It proceeds rather from these whom Paul had to denounce—a succession of self-gratification and earthly-mindedness. In its final development it has come to this.

Then again, the adjective, “great,” is applied to her, and this is a feature that appeals very much to the world. Earthly greatness and abominable corruption reach a climax in her, whereas the true church is to have on her the stamp of heaven and holiness, as we see in chapter 21: 10, where the adjective, “great,” as applying to the holy Jerusalem, ought not to appear.

Verse 6 adds another sinister feature. The system that the woman symbolizes is a great persecutor of the true followers of Jesus, and is so full of their blood that she is intoxicated therewith. All down the centuries their blood has flowed at the hands of the Romish church and her harlot offspring, but at the close this feature too will reach a climax. The sight of all this, even in symbol, so filled John with wonderment that the angel offered an explanation of the mystery, or inner meaning, both of the woman and of the beast. This

explanation follows in the rest of the chapter; yet it is to be noted that it nearly all concerns the beast. That concerning the woman is only given in the last verse.

In the light of the explanation, the beast is evidently to be identified with the one described in the early part of chap. 13. Additional features, however, appear here. The empire that it symbolizes had an early existence, then it became extinct—to outward appearances at least—and then it is to reappear. It “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit;” that abyss into which Satan shall be cast for 1,000 years, as we are told in chapter 20. This means that it will be revived in a very evil form under Satanic influence, and be of so remarkable and sensational a character that all the earth-dwellers, who had no part in the book of life, will be filled with wonder, and fall easy victims to its enslaving power. That the empire in its revived form would be Satanicly **supported** and **directed**, chapter 13 showed us. Here we discover that it will be Satanicly **produced**, and that in such a way as to enslave the minds of all those false religionists, who have debased the faith of Christ to a mere religion of earthly things. We think there must be a definite connection between this and that of which 2 Thessalonians speaks—the “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

The seven heads of the beast have a twofold meaning. They represent firstly, seven mountains on which the woman sits, and this helps to identify with Rome both the beast and the woman; that is, both the empire and the religious system.

In John's day Rome was without doubt the city of the seven hills.

But seven kings are also signified, and these distinct from the ten kings signified by the horns. The ten are kings who rise up in the last days, when the beast will represent not only the empire but also the empire's last and imposing head. In verse 10 the kings are clearly different, and represent successive heads of the empire, or rather successive forms of despotic government, and not individuals. Emperors held the power when our Lord was crucified and when John wrote, and they continued to do so until the empire broke up, but they had been preceded by five other forms of rule. A seventh was to come, that would continue but a short time and then be replaced by the eighth, who would be “of the seven;” that is, not entirely new but a reproduction of one of the earlier seven—of the imperial form.

This eighth, then, we should identify with the beast of chapter 13: 4-8, and again with the “little horn” of Daniel 7: 8. If this be so, we may understand the seventh head, who continues for a short time only, to be a personage of importance and in control when first the empire reappears, but to be replaced by the “little horn” — Satan's nominee—when he rises up with a “look . . . more stout than his fellows,” and three kings fall before him, as Daniel 7: 20 predicts. But the eighth, in spite of his dazzling splendour, is not permitted a long course. God intervenes and he “goeth into perdition.”

The ten horns, according to verse 12, are the actual individuals who

attain to kingly power for the brief spell during which the beast wields supreme authority. They are his willing vassals and support his Satanic schemes, even to the point of madness in making war with the Lamb. Men are going to reach such a pitch of mental inflation and self-confidence and arrogance, that they will actually fling themselves against the mighty power of God. We may say—borrowing the language of 1 Corinthians 8: 5 — that however many lords and kings there may be in heaven and on earth, the Lamb is Lord and King of them all, the beast and his satellites included. They inevitably fall before Him; and He has His associates, called, chosen and faithful. They too were rejected by men but are chosen of Him.

Verse 15 mentions the woman, but only to emphasize how complete her dominating power had been. It is remarkable that in this chapter she is seen sitting on the waters, on the beast, and on the seven mountains. Putting the three together, we are helped to identify her, and conducted to the last verse of our chapter. Two verses, however, intervene, in which we are shown her miserable end.

The ten kings, represented by the horns, are to be distinguished not only from the seven kings of verse 10, but also from "the kings of the earth," spoken of in verse 2, and who reappear in the next chapter. These kings of the earth are seduced by her, have illicit commerce with her—the "fornication" that is spoken of—and they greatly lament her destruction. They are doubtless the kings or leaders of many peoples who are outside the revived Western empire. The ten

kings are leaders within the empire, who favour her at first and help to support her, but finally find her yoke intolerable, hate her and fall upon her with such fury as to destroy her.

When the corrupt religious system, symbolized by the woman, shall have reached the height of its influence, its apparent success and glory, it will be completely overthrown by the worldly powers that have been its main support. It is God's way to permit each successive form of evil to come to a head in fullest manifestation and apparent success before His judgment falls upon it. Here the judgment falls mediately through the ten kings and not immediately from the hand of God. The two beasts are to be dealt with immediately, by the Lord Jesus in person, as we shall see in chapter 19, for in them the **violence** of sin reaches its climax. In the harlot the **corruption** of sin reaches its most horrible expression. God does not put His hand upon the filthy thing but uses the violent to destroy the corrupt.

That God lies behind the violence of the ten horns is made quite clear in verse 17. The horns act with an agreement and unanimity which is very rarely found amongst men. Usually there are dissentient voices, and the majority prevails over the minority. Here all act together as with one mind under the guidance of the beast, and as a result vengeance falls in a stroke of swiftness and completeness.

The completeness of her judgment is expressed in four ways in the latter part of verse 16. Bearing in mind that she symbolizes a religious system, the significance of each item

becomes clear. She is made desolate; that is, forsaken by all who formerly were friends and supporters. She is made naked; that is, stripped of everything that had formerly hid her true character. They eat her flesh; that is, appropriate to themselves all her wealth and luxuries. They burn her with fire; that is, utterly destroy the whole framework of her system. A clean sweep is made of the whole accursed thing. Little as they may realize it, the kings are acting as the executors of God's vengeance.

The identification of the woman and the great city, which is Rome, is made quite clear in the last verse of the chapter; and following this, in chapter 18, the city aspect becomes much the more prominent.

Another angel of special power and glory now appears, coming down from heaven and announcing Babylon's fall. In chapter 14: 8, John saw an angel who made this announcement, but here it is given with greater impressiveness and with more detail. The evil system which is thus represented had long been fallen **morally**, now it is fallen **under Divine judgment**. Yet it is acknowledged as "great" even by this angel, who himself had "great power." Men are naturally inclined to worship what is great, especially if it is something produced by themselves, though this had really been Satan's masterpiece.

When God judges any system or individual their real character is made wholly manifest. This feature is seen here. Babylon had become infested with evils of the most virulent type. Demons had made it their habitation or dwelling place, and not merely a spot that they

visited occasionally. Moreover every foul or unclean spirit was there. Demons **are** spirits but men **have** spirits that sin has made utterly unclean, and every kind of spirit is included in this statement. Thirdly, there are hateful birds. We may remember that in the parable of the sower the Lord used the birds as figures of agents that Satan uses in the world of men. So Babylon had become a place where demons were perfectly at home, and where every kind of evil spirit and evil man had been held as in a cage or prison. A fearful and crushing indictment indeed!

Verse 3 again emphasizes what had been stated in the previous chapter. This abominable system by her very corruption had exercised a controlling fascination over the kings of the earth—the leaders of earth's politics. And her wealth and luxury had equally fascinated and controlled the merchants of the earth—the leaders of earth's commerce. So in the last days religion, politics and commerce will find for a brief moment in Babylon a centre that unifies. And the religion will be as **earthly** as the politics and the commerce.

A voice from heaven gives the final cry, "Come out of her, My people." One can hardly imagine that many of those, who can be owned as God's people, will be in any sense inside such a system as it faces its final overthrow, yet doubtless there will be some like Lot, who was only dragged out of Sodom at the last moment. It is ever God's way to give such a final warning. Another illustration of it is seen in the Epistle to the Hebrews, written a short time before the destruction

of Jerusalem, and calling upon Jewish Christians to go forth to the rejected Christ without the camp, and reminding them that they had no continuing city on earth.

Those who in the last days might remain in Babylon would run the risk of partaking of her sins and of the plagues visited upon her sins. This also is vividly illustrated by the case of Lot, his wife and daughters. But do not let us miss the application of all this to ourselves. Verse 4 plainly declares that association with evil has a defiling effect. By remaining in an evil and defiling system we

become a partaker of its sins, and eventually of the governmental judgments of God that fall upon it.

In our day religious evil and sin is not yet headed up in one great system, but is surrounding us in many lesser and apparently conflicting systems. There are many traps for our feet, though smaller ones. The situation is more confused, but no less seductive. Let us be careful to obey this injunction to come out; cutting our links with associations that defile. And having **come out**, let us **keep out**.

## Humility.

**T**HERE is a difference between being humble before God, and being humbled before God. I am humbled before God because I have not been humble. I am humbled because of my sin. If I had been humble, I should have had grace given to me to prevent it. For "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

The only humble place is the presence of God. It is when I get out of His presence that I am in danger of being lifted up. People say it is dangerous to be too often on the mount. Now I do not think that it is when we are on the mount that we are in danger, but when we come off it. It is when we come off the mount that we begin to think that we have been there. Then pride comes in. I do not think that Paul needed a thorn when he was in the third heavens. It was after he had come down that he was in danger of being

exalted above measure—from thinking that he had been where no one else had been.

I do not believe that to think badly of ourselves is true humility. True humility is never to think of ourselves at all—and that is so hard to come to. It is constantly **I, I, I**. If you only begin a sentence with **I**, there is nothing that a person will not put after it.

What hearts have we! "I the Lord search the heart." Who but God can know them? Persons who think they search their hearts and are quick in their evil, do not really know their hearts, nor are they truly humble. The fact is, they **must** be talking of **themselves**, and their pride is nourished even by talking of how evil they are.

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## “A MORE EXCELLENT WAY.”

A. J. POLLOCK

THE assembly at Corinth was enriched “in all utterance, and in all knowledge” (1 Cor. 1: 5). It came behind in no gift, and was indeed a favoured company of believers. But unless gift is accompanied by grace, it may well become a menace to those who possess it. This was seen in the party-making and carnality that marked the assembly at Corinth. “Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” was the solemn and searching question the Apostle Paul asked them.

Wherein lay this carnality? Among other things it was seen in their fastening upon the spectacular gift of tongues to the neglect of the less spectacular and more spiritual gifts.

The gift of tongues was unknown in the Old Testament times. Of old miracles attested new departures in the ways of God, as for instance the miraculous gift of a son to Abraham, when Sarah, his wife, and he were long past the age when this was possible to nature, a demonstration to Abraham that the promise of God, that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, would materialize. Later, Moses was empowered to perform miracles, attesting him as God’s chosen leader to bring His earthly people out of Egypt. Still later Elijah and Elisha performed miracles in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, attesting the power of God in a land given up to idolatry.

But in the New Testament we find the preaching of the apostolic gospel was accompanied by a new kind of miracle, even of tongues. So we find

the Apostle Paul rebuking this craze of the Corinthian assembly for the miraculous to the neglect of “the best gifts” in chapter 14 of his epistle. We have had efforts put forth in this country to rival the apostolic days by professing to speak with tongues. These attempts have been far removed from the sobriety and power of those apostolic days, and from subjection to the instructions that Scripture gives as to their exercise. They stand self-condemned, either as trickery or demonism, in our judgment.

At the end of chapter 12 the Apostle exhorted these Corinthian saints to covet earnestly “the best gifts.” It is striking that the gift of tongues is placed last in the list of gifts enumerated in 1 Cor. 12: 10 and 28. When once Christianity was attested in this striking way, speaking by tongues ceased, just as the Church bells announce a coming service, and cease their raucous voices the moment the service begins.

But there is still “a more excellent way,” than “the best gifts.” And that more excellent way is outlined for us in that wonderful chapter — 1 Corinthians 13 — all dedicated to the subject of divine love. We have often heard the new commandment that we should love one another described as the eleventh commandment, but this has always grated on our ears. The ten commandments were addressed to man in the flesh. The Epistle to the Galatians speaks of being under the law as being under bondage. Not so

is the command of our risen Lord that we should love one another. There the command is given to a nature that finds its truest liberty in responding to it. The principle is seen in the verse, which says, "When Thou saidest, Seek ye My face; my **heart** said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27: 8). To put the ten commandments alongside 1 Corinthians 13 is like seeking to mix oil and water, sorrow with joy, to join bondage with liberty. The **NEW** commandment of the Gospel has nothing to do in character and nature with the **OLD** commandments of Sinai with its thunderings and earthquakes.

It surely is most cheering in these days of brokenness and weakness, where there are little isolated assemblies, who can claim no gift in their midst, to have placed before them something that is superior to having gift, even the more excellent way of love. Have we not often seen a few embers scattered here and there in the hearth about to die out, yet these embers when carefully raked together, so that the heat of each could contribute to the whole, very soon made a very cheerful and cheering blaze. So it may be in divine things.

Love never faileth. Prophecies will, for the time will come when all prophecies will have been fulfilled, and there will be no prophecies awaiting fulfilment. Tongues, so attractive to the carnal mind of fallen human nature, will cease, for there will be only one language in the new creation when all things will have become new. Tongues are a reminder of the pride

of man when he would build a city and a tower whose top should reach to heaven. But God stepped in and broke the power of man, seeking to be compact and of one mind in defiance of God Himself, by the confounding of their language, thus giving them tongues to weaken them. Knowledge too will pass away, in that knowledge is comparative, some know more than others, but in new creation we shall no longer know in part, but in fullness of knowledge. All shall know as they are known.

Now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love. Love is the divine nature. God is love, and the believer loves all those, who are begotten of God, as he loves God Himself. Here is a word for all of us. If we belong in the kindness of God to a gifted assembly, there is still something better than coveting the best gifts, there is a more excellent way, and that is love. If there is gift **and love** permeating an assembly how happy it must be, but if we are in a small assembly with no gift, how blessed to have the more excellent way left to us.

Let us seek to display the qualities of Divine love, suffering long and yet kind, envying not, seeking not one's own, not easily provoked, thinking no evil, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3: 18). "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3: 23).

# THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST. W. H. WESTCOTT

**T**HERE are only two passages in which this is referred to: the first in Romans 8: 34, and the second in Hebrews 7: 25.

In the Epistle to the Romans the saints are considered in the light of what they were before the grace of God reached them, and then in the light of the position and character granted to them on earth by that grace. They are justified, and are brought into the circle of the love of God. They are indwelt by God's Spirit, who empowers them to suffer now with Christ, even as they will reign with Him hereafter. But, though delivered from condemnation and set free by the Spirit from the power of inherent sin, they are surrounded by pressure. There is groaning in the whole creation, till Christ returns; and there is opposition from men who reckon Christians as sheep for slaughter. The pain of trial on the one hand, and the perils of persecution on the other would depress and discourage the elect of God, did they not learn that their Representative, Christ, both died and rose, and went to God's right hand—there to make intercession for them. Assured of this Friend in the high court of heaven, they are not only enabled to endure, but to triumph whilst enduring.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the believing company, associated with the glorious Person of Christ, is seen coming out of old and venerable traditions; quitting Moses and Aaron, Canaan and the temple, law and sacrifice—all to go forth unto Him, bearing His reproach, until the day when the kingdom which cannot be

shaken shall be visibly established in heaven and earth. They need, consequently, not only to be led into the enjoyment of heavenly associations, but also to be sustained in the persecution sure to occur from their former religious companions. For them Christ, having superseded all former leaders, has made their final triumph secure, is seated on the right hand of the throne of God; and in calling upon His people to follow, is ever living to make intercession for them. His sympathy with them in all their experiences is most perfect, making them to realize that He is their best and dearest Friend; while He leads their yearnings up to Himself in God's presence, giving them an at-home feeling within the Holiest of All.

These, then, are the two passages wherein the thought of intercession is connected with Christ personally.

Of intercession itself, and what is meant by it, it is plain in these instances that Jesus the Christ is interesting Himself actively in heaven on the behalf of His people on the earth. For their atonement, His sacrifice on Calvary renders them for ever clear in the sight of God. There is no condemnation now to them that are in Christ Jesus; and being once purged they have no more conscience of sins. But His resurrection and ascension did not terminate His interest in His saints. The last action at Bethany, when He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples, is an assurance that even the thought of ascension into glory did not obliterate His deep concern in their welfare; while the words

“ for us ” in Romans, and “ for them ” in Hebrews, both emphasize the truth that He is using His position and His power on behalf of His beloved ones here.

But intercession involves the idea of His speaking to some One about us and for us. Is it not affecting to think of this, that the risen and exalted Saviour, the Great Priest of our confession, sitting on the right hand of God, is closely watching us in our weakness and trial, and is speaking to God about us, incessantly requesting on our behalf what we are often too ignorant or too feeble to ask for ourselves? One consequence is that no circumstance can be conceived, of things present or to come, which can separate us from the love of Christ. If we think in some weary moment that He has forgotten, or that His intercession has ceased, let us be assured that He is at that very moment more surely soliciting mercy and grace on our behalf; and that in looking to Him we shall be supported beyond ourselves.

Another consequence is that instead of being overwhelmed in an

environment of sorrow, or pressure from business care, or loss of friends, the very contrary is the case: they are found to be means of loosening our minds from this world, and of setting us free for a fuller appreciation of our Lord and Representative where He has gone. He measures the effect of all such occurrences upon our spirits, and utters our names before God with the suitable request that either the circumstances may be altered for our good, or the ministry of His Spirit and His servants be so directed, as that we may occupy our hearts with His perfections rather than with our own distress.

Thus we see that our Lord (who is over all, God blessed for ever) has taken and retains a place in Manhood for us, in which He still prays even though seated upon the throne. He cannot be other than or less than He is, the Son. He was the Son in the days of creation, He was the Son in humiliation on the earth, He is the Son now upon heaven's throne, and will ever be the Son when He comes to His kingdom for ever and ever, and wields the sceptre of righteousness.

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When my soul is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of this world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be a question with you, “ what harm is there in this or that ? ” but rather “ am I doing this for Christ ? ”

The eye of God rests upon every least spark of faithfulness in the midst of evil, there is not one throb of the heart that beats true to Himself, in the midst of abounding iniquity, that pass unheeded by Him.

All our little sorrows and separations were but little drops by the way, to make us feel that we were not with Him. How well ordered all is ! I ever long more to be in heaven with Him before the Father, though I desire to finish whatever He has for me to do. And if it keeps me awhile out for Him, then it is worth while.

# THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT.

S. E. AZIZ

**T**HE subject of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is so extensive that we refer only to a few salient points.

The idea of anointing can be traced back to the earliest ages. In the book of Ezekiel we read of a great Being who is spoken of as "the anointed Cherub" (see 28: 14). Thus before men were anointed, the idea existed. God anointed great men for a definite purpose. So Abraham and others were spoken of as God's anointed ones. "Touch not Mine anointed" (Ps. 105: 15).

Now, the believer in the Lord Jesus is regarded not only as indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit, but anointed also. The moment when we believe the Gospel of our salvation we are sealed and anointed. These are not two separate bestowals of the Spirit, but one (see 2 Cor. 1: 21; Eph. 1: 13, and 1 John 2: 20).

The subject of anointing is presented in the Old Testament in a threefold way, viz., in connection with priests, prophets and kings.

The priests were anointed to be set apart to God, and for service in the sanctuary.

The prophets were anointed in order to convey the oracles of God to the people.

The kings were anointed that they might rule for God by having the Spirit of God resting upon them.

The anointing is the capacity for spiritual understanding and power, which God confers upon men so that they may rightly represent Him in

testimony. What dignity belongs to all who have been anointed by God! No earthly position or social standing can be compared with this; even "babes in Christ" have an unction from the Holy One by the power of which they are rendered capable of knowing all things, as we see in 1 John 2.

Now we shall see how our Lord was anointed, and what was the manner of His reception of the Spirit.

The anointing of the Lord was distinguished from others since He was unique. From John 1: 33, 34, we see that the Spirit comes to Him as Son; that is, in relation to His person. There the Spirit is spoken of as "descending and remaining on Him." The Spirit of God found a permanent resting place in the Son.

The kings and prophets were anointed with oil, but our Lord was anointed with the Holy Ghost. He did everything through the Holy Spirit, not of Himself, though He was vested with all power as God—God over all blessed for ever. If He had done everything in His own inherent power, He could not have said, speaking of the one who believes on Him, "The works that I do shall he do also."

In turning to Luke 3, we see that the Lord is here presented to us as the perfect Man. While praying He was baptized. The heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from

heaven which said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased."

What follows anointing is sealing in 2 Corinthians 1. In sealing God, as it were, puts His stamp upon us

and says You are Mine.

In conclusion let us remember that just as the Lord was on earth as the Anointed to set forth God, so we are here as anointed ones to set forth our Lord Jesus during His absence.

## A SHORT MEDITATION.

J. ANDERSON

**T**HERE is a sequence in Scripture that the thoughtful reader may discern. Wonderful things are there unfolded, and the Holy Spirit enables us to see Divine wisdom forging precious links in the chain of Divine truth. For this purpose is He given, as we are told in John 16: 13.

In John 12: 32 we have the expression, "**Lifted up,**" which is immediately connected with the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we read in the next verse, "This He said, signifying what death He should die." Our minds are carried at once to John 3: 14-16. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." The context brings in the wonderful magnitude of God's love to a fallen creation, and brings before us the plan of redemption in a simple yet most profound way. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hence, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth [in death] will draw all unto Me." His death is for us the only means of life.

Romans 6: 4 contains the expression, "**Raised up,**" in connection with Christ coming forth in resurrection. In many and various ways this most important truth is stamped upon the pages of Holy Writ, and in this way God leaves a strong witness of His mighty power. The Apostle Paul speaks of resurrection at great length in 1 Corinthians 15, but as it is not the subject here it will be sufficient to say that there he describes some of the witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, saying, he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve and afterwards by above five hundred brethren at once.

These facts and many others are there recorded, but in Romans 1: 4, we have—most important of all—God's declaration of His Sonship. This is the third time in Scripture. Firstly at Jordan, Matthew 3: 17, "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Secondly, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Matthew 17: 1-5, a voice out of the cloud says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." Finally, in Romans 1: 4, He is "declared to be the Son

of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." This same power will be brought into operation on behalf of all believers so that we, too, may participate in this glorious resurrection, according to Ephesians 1: 18-20, which says, that we may know, "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

This carries us on to the next thought, for in 1 Timothy 3: 16 we have the expression, "**Received up.**" There are wonderful things in this great verse, for all truth is centred in the Person and manifestation of the Son of God. Here we have the Incarnation; God manifest in the flesh; that is, the coming into the world of a Divine Person in the lowly Jesus of Bethlehem. He was seen of angels; for they attended Him, as ministers of His at His birth, throughout His pathway here, and on leaving the world as recorded in Acts 1: 10. He was, and is, preached unto the Gentiles, and the effect was then as it is now: some believed, and some believed not.

When the Lord Jesus ascended up to take His seat on high, far above all principality and power and might and every name that is named in this world and that which is to come, He was "received up." We can well imagine all the dignitaries of heaven waiting to welcome and receive Him to the place of which He alone is

worthy: Head of the universe. Elijah of old, when he was translated, was attended by "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2: 12). How much more then, at the "receiving up" of the Lord of Glory, there was not only a chariot in waiting; but far more. When He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, "the chariots of God" were "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psa. 68: 17, 18).

This brings us to the last point. In 1 Thessalonians 4: 17, we have the expression "**Caught up,**" and this concerns every believer. Every blood-bought child of God will participate in this glorious event, for we are to be in all things like our precious Lord. Has He died? Then we have died with Him. Has he been raised? Then we too are risen with Him, and shall rise again, if before His coming we fall asleep. Has He been "caught up" in the cloud? Then we, too, shall have the same portion. How precious to know that all who believe, whether alive or asleep in Jesus, shall be "caught up" together in the clouds, so that if he was "received up" then we, too, shall be "received up" by Himself. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," and we shall be "caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Blessed truth! Glorious prospect! These four points, then, "Lifted up," "Raised up," "Received up," "Caught up," surely give us a brief epitome of the foundation and climax of Christianity.

# THE BROKEN VESSEL AND THE LIGHT.

J. HOUSTON

**WHEN** God acts in that which is to secure His glory, and the deliverance of His people, He does it in such a way as to leave no ground on which flesh can glory. "That no flesh should glory in His presence," is a comprehensive word that refers to all His ways with man. This, we see, is demonstrated in Gideon's army (see Judges 7).

The condition of the children of Israel, under the Midianites, was deplorable. Their misery could scarcely have been surpassed, not even by their slavery in Egypt. And this came upon them, as the result of forsaking God. How costly are the consequences of turning the back on God! Truly, "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Prov. 14: 14). But God is always merciful towards his erring people, and He hears their cries for relief. It was so, when they cried to Him, under their bondage in Egypt; and it has been so, all through their history. In mercy, then, He came to deliver them from the power of the Midianites, and that through His servant Gideon, with a small army.

Gideon was a poor man, and of poor people. He had nothing in which he could glory. His army, at the first, might have had something in which to glory, for it was relatively large; but it pleased God to cut it down, so as to remove all ground for such glorying. It is, undoubtedly, the same to God whether He effects deliverance to His people from their enemies, by few or by many, since the instruments He is pleased to use are nothing, and His

power is everything. Divine reckoning is not with "flesh and blood," but with a power that brooks no opposition. Faith sees this; fears nothing in man; rests quietly in, and waits calmly on, the God of hosts. How blessed it is to know God as the One in whom all power resides!

In calling to action his small army, Gideon broke it up into three companies of one hundred men each. This would further weaken the already weak army. Strange procedure for a man about to face an almost numberless enemy! Three hundred men might have been reckoned as the minimum. To further reduce its strength was to bring it to the maximum of weakness. In fact, the lesson to be learned, in divine reckoning, is that we cannot get low enough, nor weak enough, for God to use us. Therein lies all our trouble. Almost invariably some element of self-confidence clings to us, and hinders the operation of God's power.

Three hundred men, in three separate companies, of one hundred men in each company, with no weapon in their hand, would not present a formidable foe to the hosts of the Midianites. Indeed, in themselves, they would be no match. Were it a battle, in which strength in the flesh was to decide the issue, then Gideon's insignificant army would be promptly and signally routed. But it was not a battle in which flesh was to decide the issue; it was a battle in which God's power was to be manifested, and that in human weakness. Gideon

had faith to believe this, and in the power of his faith he marched into the enemy's camp (see Hebrews II: 32).

As regards the equipment of his small army, it was but the symbol of weakness. Gideon, it is written, "put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers." The trumpets were to sound victory, and that before it was actually won, victory being viewed as a foregone conclusion. Thus it ever is in faith's reckoning. The empty pitchers were a fitting vessel for God to use. Emptiness in the vessel is its best commendation for usefulness, for then God can fill it. The lights in them spoke of God's power. When the trumpets were sounded by the army, at a given signal, as an act of obedience, and the earthen vessels, or pitchers, were broken, allowing the light to shine out, then "all the host [of Midianites] ran, and cried and fled." Here was a battle which was fought, and won, without weapons.

We have a deep spiritual lesson to learn from this unique victory. Our war is not against material foes, but against spiritual forces. Our armour is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit of God. And since God's power can only be made manifest in our weakness, we need to be brought into death, as to ourselves, and to all that is of ourselves, in order that His power may be seen in resurrection. In other words, our earthen vessels have to be broken, in order that His power may shine out. When we learn this lesson, we shall be of use to God, just as Gideon learned it, with his small army, and came out

victorious, in his battle against the Midianites.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4 the real spiritual meaning of the broken vessel, and the outshining light. He says: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Furthermore he says: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." God, first of all, caused the light of Christ's glory to shine into the heart, that it might, through the broken vessel, shine out to others. The secret, therefore, of this effulgent, or outshining, light lies in the breaking of the vessel, and the vessel here is the body. It does not mean that the body dies actually; but that in the body death is borne, as a real and practical experience. In fact, life for the Christian is only practically realised by experimentally entering into death. Hence the apostle says: "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

If it be asked, How does death work in us? We answer that it works in us, as we bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus; and in doing this, we manifest the life of Jesus in our body. Two lives could not be lived in one body. Of necessity, one must die, in order to let the other live. The life we give up, renouncing in daily experience, is the life of the flesh. To this we daily die. The life we live, or should live, is the life of Jesus, that is, the

life of love and sacrifice that was seen in Him, always spending for others, and never for self.

In the Apostle's case, however, peculiar trials were borne, which had the effect of placing him in death. He mentions them: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." To him, life was one long sacrifice, for he lived for others; hence he could say to the Corinthians, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." This was really the life of Jesus he was showing to the Corinthians, a life of sacrifice for them.

But the life of Jesus, seen in the body, is not confined to the apostles, however brilliantly it may have been shown by them, in their devoted service. It may be seen in some of the Lord's afflicted ones, bed-ridden perhaps with some incurable disease. We think of a sister, who was bed-ridden for many years with an incurable disease. Her whole body was racked with pain. She never knew what it was to be free from suffering, night or day. Yet we never knew her to murmur, or in any way refer to herself and her sufferings.

On the contrary, she was radiant with joy; and always full of praise and thanksgiving to God. Surely, this was the life of Jesus, manifested in a broken vessel. As to the brokenness of the vessel, in her poor, tortured body, there was no question, as it was seen by all who knew her, and visited her. As to the radiancy of the light that shone out of it there was no doubt, for it was an illumination, and inspiration, to all who saw her. We can testify to it, for we have never seen a more brilliant light of heaven, as in that poor earthen vessel, broken with suffering.

Nor are we seeking to confine the breaking of the vessel to the sick-bed, or to other physical suffering. It can be seen in those who are of sound body, but who live a life of complete self-denial, in serving others; such a life as Jesus lived. This is the life of Jesus, seen in a sound body, in constant daily activity, just as in an infirm body, confined to four walls, or to a bed. The whole thing is summed up in this: "For me to live is Christ." Beyond this, we cannot see how it is possible to go, so great is it; yet we can all have it before us, however far short we may come of its realization. Let us aim at having the right object, namely, showing the life of Jesus in a broken vessel.

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In the days of His flesh He often rebuked the reserves and suspicions of little faith, but never the strength and decision of faith that aimed as at everything and would not go without a blessing.

Love to Christ is the mainspring to holiness.

It solves every difficulty to ask—not what harm is there in doing this or that—but why am I doing it? Is it for God or myself.

Many Christians are tempted much in this world, because they tamper much with the world.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 18: 4—19: 12)

**I**T is God's way to sever His people from the ungodly, and take them out of their midst, before His judgment falls. He acted thus before the flood, and again in Egypt, as well as in the case of Sodom, and with His people before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Thus it will be with the Church before the vials of wrath are poured out, and with earthly saints who may be entangled in Babylon before it is judged. This is shown in verse 4.

Verse 5 shows that judgment only falls when the cup of iniquity is full to the brim; or, as it is stated, "her sins have **reached unto heaven.**" This is striking language, for the ancient city, Bablyon, started when men began to federate, with the idea of self-aggrandizement and influence by the building of a city and tower, "whose top may **reach unto heaven**" (Gen. 11: 4). The ancient Babylon reached the height of its splendour under the famous *Nebuchadnezzar, who wielded the widest influence and reached the top-stone of self - aggrandizement.* Shortly after this, the city lost its supremacy and descended into ruin. The principles for which it stood were, however, perpetuated in Rome; first in the imperial, and then in the papal form.

In this mystical Babylon, then, we see all the old evils displayed in their intensest and most virulent form, and at last the "tower" of man's iniquity does indeed attain such dimensions that it has "reached unto heaven." In drastic fashion the well-merited judgment then falls,

and the hateful thing sinks out of sight for ever.

Verses 6 and 7 emphasize how apposite are God's judgments. They fit the case exactly. The same thing may be noticed in the enactments of the law of Moses, which brought upon the offender the very penalty he had inflicted on another, and relieved the offended party. Babylon is to get her exact "double" or equivalent, and her torment and sorrow is to be the counterpart of her previous self-glorification and luxury.

There is an allusion in verses 7 and 8 to Isaiah 47: 8 and 9. What was said, in predicting the fall of the literal Babylon by the Euphrates, is duplicated in the judgment of the mystical Babylon, but with one addition: It is the mystical Babylon who says, "I sit a **queen.**" This again is striking, for here we have the full-blown result in display of the apostate "church." The true church is the bride of Christ, and destined to be His partner in the day of the glory of the kingdom. The apostate church is "no widow," though her Lord has been slain upon the earth, and she claims to be "queen," though He is absent, and the day of His power not yet come. She aims at queenly influence and a life of delicious self-indulgence and self-glorification, while He is still absent and rejected.

But judgment is to fall upon her "in one day." A stroke of terrible severity and swiftness falls upon her; described as plagues, death, mourn-

ing, famine. Nothing mitigates the stroke; no time for a parley to avert it. The overwhelming stroke is administered by the ten kings, as the end of chapter 17 showed, but behind their action is the hand of God. The Lord God who judges her is strong, and all her tinsel glory vanishes beneath His avenging hand.

Verses 9 to 19 indicate how the kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth, and the shipmasters of the sea will react to her judgment. The ten kings, who had been dominated by her, rise up and destroy her, but outside the ten-kingdom empire are many kings who had profited by their connection with her, and they lament. By "kings" we understand national leaders: by "merchants of the earth" leaders of trade and commerce: by "shipmaster and all the company in ships" leaders in transport. For all these her destruction is a disaster, for she was the great trafficker in all earth's luxuries. The list of verses 12 and 13 begins with gold. It ends with the bodies and souls of men.

Even today there is no sadder scandal than Rome's traffic in the bodies and souls of men—more particularly in their souls. Souls become most profitable "merchandise," when it is a question of extricating them from an imaginary "purgatory;" merchandise which has brought into her coffers more gold and silver and precious stones than all the trading in other objects of luxury put together.

The lament of verse 16 has a familiar sound to those who know Rome's ways in lands where her sway is nearly absolute. Many years ago we stood in the great Cathedral

of "Our Lady of the Pillar," in Saragossa, Spain, and watched some kind of "mass" being performed by ecclesiastics, gorgeous in "fine linen, and purple, and scarlet." Then some visitors were being shown the great collection of gifts, left by deluded votaries, housed in a kind of side chapel. We slipped in with them, and beheld enormous cases reaching up the walls, which, when the lights were turned on, sparkled with "gold and precious stones, and pearls" in dazzling variety.

And just when all this greatness and costliness and outward glory reaches its finest display, her outrageous sin reaches its climax, and the judgment of God falls. The action of the mighty angel, recorded in verse 21, gives us an idea of the violence of the overthrow from the hand of God.

How great is the contrast between earth and heaven! Their respective reactions could not be more opposite. The casting of dust upon the head, weeping and wailing, on the one hand; rejoicings, on the other. Holy apostles and prophets are now avenged on her: further proof, if it be needed, that mystical Babylon represents the great system of false and corrupted religion, which from the outset has persecuted the servants of God. This interpretation is further reinforced by the last verse of the chapter. The day of reckoning had now come. Individual sinners have an eternity to spend. Evil systems do not pass into eternity. Their judgment in its full weight falls upon them in this world.

How delightful is the contrast as we pass into chapter 19! As before

remarked, a word that characterizes chapters 17 and 18 is "earth." The Christian faith, which is centred in a heavenly Christ, has been debased into an earthly religion—a scheme for producing an earthly paradise where men may have their fill of earthly joys. That kind of religion very well suits "the kings of the earth," and "the inhabitants of the earth," and "the great men of the earth," and "the merchants of the earth;" though it may involve "abominations of the earth," and lead to saints being "slain upon the earth." Now, "after these things," says John, "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven." Consequently we step into a scene of purity and praise. The characteristic word is "Alleluia."

Let us note that while Babylon is being judged on earth there is "much people," or, a "crowd," in heaven. All the saints, who gathered to Christ at the rapture, are there. They understand the significance of what has taken place. They see that, God having dealt with the seat of earthly corruption, He will swiftly deal with earth's violence. They ascribe the salvation to God, and give Him the glory, the honour and the power. However evil men may be in this day of salvation, it hardly becomes the saint to shout "Alleluia" if he sees judgment fall upon any. But here we are contemplating the day of judgment, and God's acts of judgment are to be praised then as much as His acts of grace now.

Men's judgments are never absolutely true and intrinsically righteous, for selfish elements can never be wholly excluded from them. What men's judgments are not,

God's judgments are. 'The great whore had corrupted the earth, and heaven's pure and holy judgment had fallen upon her. The smoke of it should rise up for ever and ever. A memorial this of God's judgment against corruption, which should utter its warning voice to the ages of eternity.

Heavenly scenes again being before us, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures appear once more. God is on the throne in judgment, and in the light of this they fall down in worship. They say "Amen" to His destruction of Babylon, and join in the "Alleluia" of praise. The praise and worship described in chapter 5, started with the elders and the living creatures, and spread out to angels and all creation. Similarly here, their praise being uttered, a voice from the throne calls upon all the servants of God to follow suit, and the thunders of praise reveberate through heaven. God is manifestly on the throne in His omnipotence. God is equally on the throne today, but it is to us a matter of faith. We can sing,

"God is still on the throne,  
And He will remember His own."

though the fact is not displayed at present as it will be then.

The false, harlot "church" being judged and destroyed on earth, the moment has come for the true church to be acknowledged as the "wife" of the Lamb in heaven. There is a peculiar majesty about the language of verses 6 and 7. A terrible drama of unspeakable corruption and violent judgment has passed before us, and far above the evil and turmoil the Lord God omnipotent has sat upon the throne. All things

have served His might and nothing has diverted Him from His purpose. He has been working behind the scenes that the One, who here is called the Lamb, may see fully the fruit of the travail of His soul, and secure for Himself the "bride," for whom He died. His purpose as to this is now accomplished, the saints are in glory, and moreover, "His wife hath made herself ready."

Our meetness for glory is of course altogether the fruit of Divine workmanship; but there is also a readiness of an experimental and practical nature, and it is this which is mentioned here. On the day when the church is acknowledged as the wife of the Lamb, she will be arrayed in the "fine linen, clean and white," which is interpreted for us as "the righteousneses of the saints" (New Trans.). Every act of righteousness, wrought out in the lives of saints composing the church, will be woven, as it were, into the robe, which will adorn the wife of the Lamb in that day.

In this there is immense encouragement for us today. If we look around us at that which professes to be the church, there is nothing but discouragement. Nor are we much relieved if we confine our attention to those we can recognize as true Christians—including ourselves. We might easily become obsessed with the delinquencies of saints—their worldliness, their follies, their errors. But all the time there has been the working of the Spirit of God in them and amongst them; there have been all those right things, often unnoticed by man but ever before the eye of God, and these things will be brought to light at the judgment seat of Christ, and be for the adorning

of the church when her relationship to the Lamb is publicly acknowledged in heaven. If our eyes were as quick to discern the right as to detect the wrong, we should get the encouragement of this today.

The elders together with the living creatures appear for the last time in verse 4. They were first mentioned in chapter 4: 4. In chapters 2 and 3 we have the seven churches of Asia—local churches—and they are mentioned once more in chapter 22: 16. The word, "church," is not used in the Revelation as referring to the whole body of Christians. Immediately we commence "the things which shall be hereafter," in chapter 4, the churches disappear, and the elders in heaven take their place. But in our chapter the church is acknowledged as the wife of the Lamb, and in the glory of this relationship the "elders" disappear. Henceforward it is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," and only when at the end we are brought down again to the testimony to be rendered on earth, while we wait for the Lord, do the "churches" again appear. Observing these changes, we find confirmation of the thought that the elders represent the saints raptured to glory.

But besides the Lamb's wife, there are "they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." These, we judge, are the glorified saints of Old Testament days. Though these were never baptized by the one Spirit into the one body, which is the church, they were raised at the same time as the saints composing the church, for they were Christ's, purchased by His blood, and the Scripture says, "they that are Christ's at His coming" (I Cor.

15: 23). Risen and glorified, they enjoy a rich heavenly portion, far beyond the blessedness that may be enjoyed upon the millennial earth. They are called in their heavenly seats to participate in the joys of the marriage supper of the Lamb. In them too the Lamb will see some of the fruits of the travail of His soul. So great is the blessing they enjoy that John is particularly instructed to write it down. It is delightful to us to know how rich is the reward of the beloved servants of God of whom we get a glimpse in Hebrews II, and of many less known saints like them.

In a small way we have surveyed and contemplated these things. We have seen the false and corrupt church system judged and destroyed. We have seen the true church acknowledged in heaven, and the once suffering Lamb thus finding His abundant recompense in having the object of His love with Himself for ever. We have heard all heaven filled with praise and worship like the voice of mighty thunderings. What has been the effect upon our spirits? Are we not all saying in our hearts—This is wonderful, wonderful, wonderful! But is it not too good to be true? This was doubtless the effect upon John; so the angel assured him, "These are the true sayings of God." We may rest assured that **all is true**, and to come to pass in its season.

Assured of its truth, John was moved to worship, though his worship was misplaced, since he fell at the feet of the angel who was showing him these things. Being a holy angel, he repudiated it instantly.

Only the fallen angel, Satan, aspires to divine honours, indeed it was in aspiring to such that he fell. The angel acknowledged himself to be but a servant, or "bondman," and therefore a fellow to John, and a fellow to all John's brethren who had the testimony of Jesus. As originally created man belongs to an order in creation a little lower than the angels, yet both men and angels are but servants, and thus fellows in that respect. God alone is worthy of worship. The fact that our Lord Jesus accepted the worship of men is a tribute to His Deity.

In his closing words the angel gave the key that unlocks all the prophetic scriptures. It is, "**the testimony of Jesus.**" All Old Testament prophecy looked forward to the coming of Jesus—Jehovah, appearing as Saviour. All New Testament prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, coming in power and glory, that His work of redemption by blood may be crowned by His work of redemption in power. This key to prophecy is also the **test** of men's prophetic systems. Any system which makes prophecy a testimony to Israel, or to the British people, imagined to be Israel, or to millennial conditions on earth and schemes for attaining to them, stands condemned.

Everything in heaven has now reached a climax of Divine order, and nothing remains but to deal with the rebellious earth. So in verse II the heavens are opened for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. We know it to be He, though symbolic language is still used. Judgment will

be in absolute righteousness at last, and H's name—Faithful and True—is the guaran'ee of this. At last the long period of man's unrighteousness and sin is to reach its end.

All the symbols used speak of purity, of searching discernment, of

all authority and power being vested in Him, yet of there being that in Him that defies all creature investigation. He has a name that no man knows but He Himself. In His manifestation all other power, all the might and majesty of the creature, shrivels into nothingness.

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## Psalm 23.

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

I shall not want rest, for He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,

I shall not want guidance, for He leadeth me beside the still waters.

I shall not want salvation, for He restoreth my soul.

I shall not want leading for He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

I shall not want courage for though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

I shall not want companionship for Thou art with me.

I shall not want comfort, for Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

I shall not want food or refreshment for Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

I shall not want anointing, for Thou anointest my head with oil.

I shall not want satisfaction for my cup runneth over.

I shall not want anything in this life, for surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

I shall not want anything in the life to come, for I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.

The above has been sent to us, and we think it particularly suited to these times of straitness — author unknown. [Editor]

# THE BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT. G. HEPBURN

Substance of an address on Hebrews 9: 19-22.

**I**T is on my mind to speak to you on what is fundamental, in the fullest sense of the word.

During recent years there has been a demand for a bloodless religion. Blood is considered vulgar; the mention of it offends the fine feelings of cultured people, so they say. Therefore, they want to get rid of it, as regards religious thought, but, strange though it may seem, along with this there has been on the earth more murder and bloodshed than ever before in history. These things do not seem to fit, and, to my mind, suggest dishonesty, hypocrisy.

The verses I have read show the very large place that blood had in the Old Testament economy. The book, the people, the tabernacle and all the vessels of service were sprinkled with blood, and almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission.

But it is not of these things I wish to speak — these are **the shadows**. What I want to speak of is **the substance**, thereby giving at least some idea of the place that blood occupies in the economy of the New Testament. I ask you to keep this in mind while I refer to several well-known scriptures bearing on the subject.

Peter, in his first epistle, seeks to impress on those to whom he writes that they had been redeemed from their vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, not by corruptible things as silver and gold,

but by the **precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Paul, writing to the Ephesian saints, says of the Beloved, "in whom we have redemption through **His blood**, the forgiveness of sins," and again to the Colossian saints he uses exactly the same words regarding "the Son of the Father's love." John, in Revelation 5, represents the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders as singing a new song and saying to the Lamb, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and **hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood** out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Redeemed from our vain conversation, redeemed in the sense of having our sins forgiven, and redeemed to God, all by the same **precious blood**.

This leads me to refer briefly to a word in Acts 20, where Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to shepherd the assembly of God "which He has purchased **with the blood of His own**" (New Trans.) Now, while this refers to the local assembly, it goes without saying that it is true of the Assembly as a whole; every believer of the present dispensation, myriads of them, purchased with the blood of His own. The New Translation, in a note, gives a similar word, "bought" as an alternative to "redeemed" in Revelation 5, and in these two passages it is not what we have been redeemed from, but that we have been secured for God by the **blood of His own, the blood of the Lamb**.

Then in Ephesians 2, Paul calls on the Gentile believers to remember the position and condition from which they had been delivered, and note the mighty contrast. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh." How? "**By the blood of Christ.**" No longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. Once we were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God and without hope. Now, brought into the place of nearness and relationship and the affections proper to those relationships, and all in virtue of **the precious blood of Christ.**

And now let us consider for a little some of our blessings. First there is the forgiveness of sins which is not, as some suppose, the end of all things. As a matter of fact it is the initial blessing that the believer of the gospel receives, the bottom rung of the ladder. But let us not think lightly of it on that account. Let us not forget that had He not interposed His blood, these sins of ours would have dragged us down to a lost eternity. Surely the very fact that it took **the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son** to cleanse us from our sins forbids our ever thinking lightly of it.

Next in order comes the question of justification, and while we are justified freely by God's grace, yet it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth "a propitiation through faith **in His blood**" (Romans 3: 25). While we are justified on the principle of faith in contrast to that of works, yet the basis of it, that on

which it rests, is His blood, "being now justified **by His blood** we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5: 9).

And now a word about reconciliation, and we are up the ladder here. I have been told that reconciliation is not by blood. Well, I shall content myself with quoting the Scriptures and leave my hearers to judge. Paul, in Colossians 1: 19, says of the Son of the Father's love "In Him all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell" (New Trans.) — Marvellous statement, beyond all human comprehension! — and "by Him to reconcile all things to Itself" — the Godhead. How? The Scripture answers, "having made peace through the blood of His cross . . . by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." The new creation with its stainless joy, the universe of bliss, the New Heaven and New Earth shall owe their very existence to **the blood of the Son of the Father's love**, shed on Calvary. How great and glorious must the Person be whose blood can accomplish such stupendous and eternal results. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works yet now hath He reconciled:" that is, the saints of the Church, a kind of first-fruits of that new and eternal order of things in which God shall rest with complacency and delight.

As to our privileges I shall refer to two of these, the two that I have learned to value most in my old age, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and entrance into the Holiest. How these words appeal to the heart — "This cup is the New Testament [Covenant] **in My blood.**" The

story of His down-stooping grace and self-sacrificing love appeals to us as nothing else could. Then, we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by **the blood of Jesus**" — the blood of the New Covenant. A righteous basis has been provided by His blood, but there also the love of God is expressed, and it is this that assures the heart and inspires confidence to draw near. In Hebrews 9: 12 we read, "neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by **His own blood** He entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption," and in chapter 10 the way is opened for us to enter. But it is in virtue of **the blood of Jesus**. And to find ourselves happy and at home in the presence of God, our hearts filled with a sense of the glory and greatness of the Lord and the infinite value of His precious blood, is the nearest to Heaven we shall know till we are actually there.

Finally what about our testimony? In Revelation 12: 11, we read of some who overcame their accuser, that old serpent, the devil, and Satan, who accused them day and

night before God; and how did they overcome him? Where did they find the strength necessary for this? Where, but in the blood of the Lamb? In that precious blood is found the perfect answer to every accusation that Satan may cast in the teeth of God regarding his people, whether such accusation be false or whether it be true, and only there is to be found the strength to make overcomers. "They overcame him by **the blood of the Lamb**, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Yes, brethren, there is power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb. Oh the wonders that dwell in **the precious blood of Christ**, the **Lamb**, the **Beloved**, the **Son of God**, the **Son of the Father's love**. Well might we sing:—

"For ever be the glory given,  
To Thee, O Lamb of God;  
Our every joy on earth, in  
Heaven,  
We owe it to Thy blood."

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"My word . . . shall not return unto Me void"

(Isa. 55: 11).

Go, doubting not! Called, chosen, sent,  
Enriched to do His will,  
Broadcast in faith the golden grain,  
Servant of God, be still  
In the glad certainty that He,  
To His own promise true,  
Will bless and fructify His word  
To others given, through — you.

G.L.B.

# THE GOOD THINGS OF THE EARTH OR OF HEAVEN ?

J. HOUSTON

Lessons from Elijah's history.

**WE** know little of the origin of this extraordinary prophet. He emerges from obscurity, and is simply called a "Tishbite," proceeding from "the inhabitants of Gilead" (I Kings 17: 1). But we do know he was a "man of God;" sent from God, as a prophet, with a message of judgment, to God's apostate people.

The guilty head of the nation was Ahab, a man of notorious sinfulness. To him, Elijah delivered this message: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Immediately he was commanded by God to hide himself by the brook Cherith. So that, in brief, he came from the unknown; delivered a message of terrible judgment, as from God; then slipped into the unknown, to be hidden with God. His public ministry was short and peremptory; his private life, that of solitude and seclusion with God.

What marks Elijah is his boldness. He fears no man. He goes to Ahab, as he might go to the poorest of his subjects. Where God's message was concerned, it was not a question of regal respect, but of uncompromising faithfulness. When later he goes to Mount Carmel, he shows power, such as rarely, if ever, has been known in a prophet. He was **alone** on that memorable occasion on Carmel; but he showed no fear, though he stood in the presence of a veritable host of enemies

(I Kings 18: 22). Perhaps he knew God in a way, in which few, if any, of the prophets knew Him. At all events, we hear him make statements, which are unique. The place of nearness to God, which he claimed, was singular; and he could speak of God's word, as his own. "The Lord God of Israel, **before whom I stand . . . according to my word.**" There can be no question; he **was** an extraordinary man.

Nor did his nearness to God mean distance from us. He "was a man subject to like passions, as we are" (James 5: 17). In God's presence, he was bold; in the presence of a woman, he was weak. Under the juniper tree (I Kings 19), we see a man, in every way, like "as we are." Strange we should see, such boldness, on the one hand; such weakness, on the other hand! But we learn the lesson of what we can be **in God**, and of what we can be **in ourselves**.

As to separation from evil, Elijah assumed a most uncompromising position. He had no contact whatever with the idolatry, which was then all but universal in Israel. Few they were, comparatively speaking, that did not bow the knee to Baal, and kiss him. If Obadiah (I Kings 18), was not guilty of the actual sin of idolatry, he failed to take the outside place of separation from the evil. There were also the seven thousand, but of them we know nothing, beyond the bare fact that

they did **not** worship Baal, **nor** kiss him (I Kings 19: 18). As to Obadiah, he retained his position in Ahab's court. A mere negative testimony — **not** sinning as others do — without an aggressive condemnation of the evil that was being committed, may permit of being in circumstances of shelter, comfort and ease, in the very place where the sin lies. Lot, in Sodom, provides us with an example of this.

God is gracious, kind and forbearing with His servants. The "bruised reed," and "smoking flax," are noticed by Him, perhaps in a place, where almost everyone has turned away from Him. However weak the testimony, borne for Him, in the darkness of this world, He takes full account of it. The weakest saint, however compromising the position in which he is found, that raises the voice to confess His name, is, indeed, noticed by Him. After all, "the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2: 19). They may have been in Ahab's court, or Caesar's court; they may even be "where Satan's seat it" (Rev. 2: 13). God knows them and will take care of them. They are His witnesses; He will remember them, in that day of coming glory.

But we must notice that the position of Elijah was altogether different from that of Obadiah. Elijah stood before God; Obadiah, before Ahab, the most wicked king then known. Elijah had his dwelling **outside** by the brook Cherith; Obadiah, **inside**, in the court. Elijah was fed by ravens, morning and evening, and drank the water of the brook; Obadiah ate and drank the regal fare of his master's provision.

Further, we see a difference between them, as to their moral standing. Elijah feared no man; Obadiah feared his lord and master, Ahab. Elijah, when he saw Obadiah, could command him, just as he commanded Ahab, because he spoke the word of God with authority, which demanded unqualified obedience. Obadiah knew Elijah, and "fell on his face," before him, saying, "Art thou that **my lord** Elijah?" (I Kings 18: 7). In answering, Elijah reminded him that he had another **lord**, even Ahab: "Go tell **thy lord**, behold Elijah is here." The attitude of Obadiah, before Elijah, was that of obsequiousness, and not, in any sense, that of **communion**.

We see the same principle in Lot, when he "bowed himself with his face towards the ground," in the presence of the Lord's messengers (Gen. 19: 1). And while Abraham "bowed himself toward the ground," he could speak to the messengers, not of **fear**, as was the case with Lot, but of **boldness**, which is the effect of **communion**. One cannot help seeing the moral distance between Lot and the Lord's messengers; on the other hand, one can easily see the moral nearness of Abraham to the Lord's messengers.

And this is strictly **moral**. It is not a question of any superiority, in a natural sense. Obadiah was a man of great rank; Elijah, a poor man, destitute of all the amenities of human society. From the natural point of view, it was for Elijah to fall "on his face," before Obadiah, and own him as **his lord**. But it was the opposite. The lesson for us, if we have a mind to take it, is,

that moral distance from God, through lack of communion, brings **fear**; on the other hand, moral nearness to Him, through habitual communion, gives great confidence and **boldness**.

Obadiah's position, in relation to Ahab, was not one, in any sense, conducive to fellowship with God, and with God's separated people. And if it be contended that Obadiah was in the position where the providence of God had set him, and it behoved him, therefore, to **remain there**, and from that position help God's people, so far as he could, we can but hold up the example of Moses. He was in a place of high rank with Pharaoh. Unquestionably, the providence of God had set him there; but **he did not remain there**. He refused it, and chose to suffer with the people of God, in the outside place of rejection. Providence placed him in Pharaoh's court; faith led him to renounce that place, and to identify himself with his suffering brethren.

Obadiah hid prophets in a cave, and fed them with bread and water; but he did not go into the cave with them, nor subsist on their fare. Moses was with God's afflicted people, in all their sufferings, identified with them in the nearest way. Exemplary servant! He and Elijah stand much on the same ground, as to this position of separation to God; and they wielded the same power, and showed the same boldness.

Nature in us, when it need not necessarily be sheer selfishness, al-

ways chooses the comfort and ease of natural things. Demas, in the apostle's day, is an example (2 Tim. 4: 10). And when we allow it to decide, which path we have to choose, it will decide on that of least resistance, and of greatest comfort. To go into a wilderness; to suffer hunger; to bear reproach; to be exposed to the rigour of hardship — this is not nature's choice. And, after all, natural blessings are from God, for He has given to us all things richly to enjoy; but these very blessings faith will renounce, even to the point of being destitute, in order to please God, and serve Him undistractedly.

We have the supreme example in our blessed Lord, who left all His glory in heaven above, to come to earth, to suffer, and to die upon the cruel and shameful cross. When on earth, He had no place to lay His head. He was the outcast and despised of men, the Man of Sorrows. Though He were rich, for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might be enriched.

Our treasure is in heaven, not on earth; our good things are all there above, not here below. And where our treasure is, there shall be our heart. Believers can make choice of earth's good things, and lose the enjoyment of the good things in heaven. They certainly cannot have both — nay, in their endeavour to have both, they may spoil both. J. N. Darby summed it up well: "Obadiah knew the good things of the earth; Elijah the good things of heaven" (Collected Writings, Vol. xxx., page 3).

# GOD IN EVERYTHING.

(Extracted and abridged).

ONE of the greatest obstacles to living a life of peace and rest, is the difficulty of seeing God in everything. People say, "I can easily submit to things which come from God; but I cannot submit to man, and most of my trials and crosses come through human instrumentality." Or they say, "It is all well enough to talk of trusting; but when I commit a matter to God, man is sure to come in and disarrange it all, and while I have no difficulty in trusting God, I do see serious difficulties in the way of trusting men."

This is no imaginary trouble, but it is of vital importance, and if it cannot be met, does really make the path of faith an impossible and visionary theory. For nearly everything in this life comes to us through human instrumentalities, and most of our trials are the result of somebody's failure or ignorance, or carelessness, or sin. We know God cannot be the author of these things, and yet unless He overrules the matter, how can we say to Him about it, "Thy will be done"?

Besides, what good is there in trusting our affairs to God, if after all, man is to be allowed to come in and disarrange them; and how is it possible to live by faith, if human agencies, in whom it would be wrong and foolish to trust, are to have a predominant influence in moulding our lives?

Moreover, things in which we can see God's hand always have a sweetness in them which consoles

while it wounds. But the trials inflicted by man are full of bitterness. What is needed then, is to see GOD IN EVERYTHING, and to receive everything directly from His hands, with no intervention of second causes.

The question here confronts us at once — But IS God in everything, and have we any warrant from the Scripture for receiving everything from His hands, without regarding the second causes which may have been instrumental in bringing it about? I answer to this, unhesitatingly, YES! To the children of God everything comes directly from their Father's hand, no matter who or what may have been the apparent agents. There are NO "SECOND CAUSES" for them. The whole teaching of the Scripture asserts and implies this. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10: 29, 30). We are not to be careful about anything, because our Father cares for us.

We are not to avenge ourselves, because our Father has charged Himself with our defence. We are not to fear, for the Lord is on our side. No one can be against us, because God is for us. We shall not want for the Lord is our Shepherd. When we pass through the rivers they shall not overflow us, and when we walk through the fire we shall not be burned, because He will be with us. He shuts the mouths of lions, that they cannot hurt us. He de-

livereth and rescueth. "He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan. 2: 21). A man's heart is in His hand, and "as the rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will." He ruleth over all the kingdoms of the heathen: and in His hand there is power and might, so that none is able to withstand Him (see 2 Chron. 20: 6). He ruleth "the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, He stilleth them." He "bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect" (Psalm 33: 10). "Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psalm 135: 6).

To my own mind, these Scriptures, and many others like them, settle for ever the question as to the power of second causes in the life of the children of God. They are all under the control of our Father, and nothing can touch us except with His knowledge, and by His permission. It may be the sin of man that originates the action, and therefore the thing itself cannot be said to be the will of God: but by the time it reaches us, it has become God's will for us and must be accepted as directly from His hands. No man or company of men, no power in earth or heaven, can touch that soul which is abiding in Christ, without first passing through Him, and receiving the seal of His permission. If "God be for us" it matters not who may be against us; nothing can disturb or harm us, except He shall see that it is best for us, and permit it to pass.

The truth really is, that His care

is infinitely superior to any possibilities of human care; and that He who counts the very hairs of our heads, and suffers not a sparrow to fall without Him, takes note of the minutest matters that can affect the lives of His children, and regulates them all according to His will, let their origins be what they may. The instances of this are numberless. Take Joseph. What could have seemed more apparently on the face of it to be the result of sin, and utterly contrary to the will of God, than his being sold into slavery? And yet Joseph in speaking of it said, "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50: 20). "Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45: 5). To the eye of sense it was surely Joseph's wicked brethren who had sent him into Egypt, and yet Joseph looking at it with the eye of faith, could say, "God sent me." It had been undoubtedly a grievous sin in his brethren, but by the time it had reached Joseph, it had become God's will for him, and was in truth, though at first it did not look so, the greatest blessing of his whole life. And thus we see how the Lord can make even the wrath of man to praise Him (Ps. 76: 10), and how all things, even the sins of others, shall work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. 8: 28).

If we look at the seen things, we shall not be able to understand this. But the children of God are called to look "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are

seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal " (2 Cor. 4: 18). Could we but see with our bodily eyes His unseen forces surrounding us on every side, we would walk through this world in an impregnable fortress, which nothing could ever overthrow or penetrate, for " the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them " (Psalm 34: 7).

We have a striking illustration of this in the history of Elisha. The king of Syria was warring against Israel, but his evil designs were continually frustrated by the prophet, and at last he sent his army to the prophet's own city for the express purpose of taking him captive. We read, " He sent thither horses, and chariots, and a great host : and they came by night, and compassed the city about."

**This** was the seen thing. And the servant of the prophet, whose eyes had not yet been opened to see the unseen things, was alarmed. And we read, " And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?" But his master could see the unseen things, and he replied, " Fear not ; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And then he prayed, saying, " Lord, I pray thee, open

his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man ; and he saw : and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha " (2 Kings 6: 14-17).

The presence of God is the fortress of His people. Nothing can withstand it. At His presence the wicked perish! The earth trembleth; the hills melt like wax, the cities are broken down ; " the heavens also dropped . . . even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God."

And in the secret of this presence He has promised to hide His people from the pride of man and from the strife of tongues, " My presence shall go with thee," He says, " and I will give thee rest " (Exod. 33: 14).

I wish it were possible to make every Christian see this truth as plainly as I see it. For I am convinced that this is the clue to a restful life, and being careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making requests known unto God, we shall have the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4: 6-7). Nothing else will take all the risks and "supposes" out of a Christian's life, and enable him to say, " Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life " (Psalm 23: 6).

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These inward trials I employ  
 From self and pride to set thee free,  
 And break thy scheme of earthly joy  
 That thou may'st seek thy all in Me.

## GIVING TO THE LORD.

A. J. POLLOCK

IT has been said ironically by opponents of the Gospel that there is one point on which every warring sect agrees, which is contained in the words of Scripture, "Now concerning the collection" (1 Cor. 16: 1). The irony bites because the appeals on behalf of Christian work are so frequent. If, however, each Christian were to give **to the Lord** and not merely to a cause, there would be no difficulty in getting the wherewithal needed to carry on the work of the Lord. The most appealing collection plate, we ever heard of, took the form of a pierced hand. It was a mute suggestion that the money placed there was offered to the Lord. If He were present, and noted the coins put on the plate, we imagine there would be few coppers, or threepenny pieces.

But there was one case where the Lord saw the rich throwing their wealth into the treasury of the Temple at Jerusalem. Of that He would not have said anything, but that it stood in contrast to a widow woman putting in two mites. He weighed these coins in the scales of the sanctuary. On the one scale were the offerings of the wealthy, on the other scale were the widow's two tiny mites. The Lord adjusted the scales and lo! the two mites weighed down the offerings of the wealthy. Why was this? It was because it was her **all**. It is interesting to note that the farthing was made up of two mites, so it was possible for her to have put one mite in the treasury, and retain the other meagre coin for her own necessities. She put in

both coins, and the Lord declared that she had put in more than all the others.

Never were coins so wrongly spoken about as these two mites. A rich man rolling in his thousands is asked to subscribe to some good cause. He draws a cheque for £5, and says with an easy smile to the applicant, "Well, here is the widow's mite." Is that so? The widow did not give the one mite, but the two, and that was all she had. The widow's mite would represent the half of the rich man's fortune; the two mites, all that he possessed. However, the Lord's commendation of the deed of this poor widow is very cheering to those who can spare but little. The Lord appreciates such wholehearted giving.

But if this is the last record in Scripture of a gift to the Temple Treasury, it stands in vivid contrast to the first gift. We know that King David had it in his heart to build a house to the Lord, but was divinely told this was not to be, for he was a man of blood, and that the Temple would be built by his son, Solomon (1 Chron. 22: 8-11).

However, David "in his trouble" prepared the materials wherewith to build the Temple to the Lord. We read that he gave 100,000 talents of gold, 1,000,000 talents of silver, besides brass and iron in abundance and timber and stone (see 1 Chron. 22: 14). We have heard of millionaires, even of multi-millionaires, but it looks as if King David's gift makes the great money kings of the United

States appear small beside such princely giving. The value of a talent of gold reckoned at £4 per ounce, was £5475. The silver talent, silver reckoned at 5/- per ounce, was worth £342 3s. 9d. 100,000 of the former and 1,000,000 of the latter comes to the colossal sum of nearly £890,000,000. Add to this brass and iron in abundance, and timber and stone, and the value of what King David gave to the Lord reached to an astronomical figure. Palestine is a little country, and yet it furnished the two most generous givers the world has ever known. The widow gave her all. David gave magnificently and royally. Is there any key to unlock the secret of such actions? We think so.

We turn to the New Testament for an answer. The Apostle writes charmingly of the churches of Macedonia, poor in wealth but rich in faith and affection for the Lord. He speaks of how in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality, that beyond their power they were eager to help the poor brethren in Jerusalem. Not only so, but with much entreaty they pressed their bounty

on the Apostle, as their agent in taking it to its destination.

And what was the secret of this outburst of generous giving, of their considering it a privilege to care for their needy brethren? The secret was that, before they gave of their money and kind, they first gave themselves to the Lord. When they gave themselves to the Lord everything else went with this consecration of themselves.

And what was the secret of their giving themselves to the Lord? It was the deep appreciation of the Lord giving Himself for their salvation. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8: 9).

How simple all administration would be, if there were the giving of ourselves unto the Lord. There would be no need to put the collection box jingling before our eyes again and again, much as a rider puts spurs to a jaded horse. "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Chron. 9: 7).

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## The Lost Sense of Unity.

Say not that self reigns only outside among the profane; show me where it does not reign among true Christians throughout Christendom. The world loves its own, says the Lord: is this as true of His members, scattered as they are in parties, national and dissenting, each the rival of the other? And this false position with its isolating effect has told powerfully on souls to wither all true sense of unity on earth, and to hold out mere progress of party, or at best labour for individual blessing, instead of the glory of Christ in the church which is His body. (w.k.)

## BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 19: 13 — 20: 6).

**T**HE Divine Names are full of significance. In His glorious appearing the Lord Jesus is presented to us with a fourfold Name. Seeing that He appears for judgment, His Name as "Faithful and True" stands first, securing the absolute rectitude of His every judgment act. Next comes the Name that no man knows but Himself. This Name, though unknown to us, signifies that there is in Him — true God and yet perfect Man — that which surpasses all creature apprehension. That being so, we are not surprised to read, "How **unsearchable** are His judgments" (Rom. 11: 33).

Thirdly, "His Name is called, The Word of God." This is most significant. We read, "The Word was God . . . All things were made by Him" (John 1: 1-3); so God has been expressed very really in **creation**. Again, in the same chapter, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," so that there might be a full declaration of the Father in grace and truth to us. But now neither creation nor **redemption** is involved but rather judgment. That in judging His Name should be called "The Word of God," signifies that God will also be declared and made known in **judgment** — particularly in His righteousness and holiness, without a doubt. Thought is expressed in word. The Lord Jesus is the expression of the Divine thought in all three connections.

Lastly, His Name, "King of kings and Lord of lords," is written

on His vesture; that is, externally, where every eye may see it. It is also on His thigh; internally, in the place of His secret strength. It is hardly an eternal designation like the others, for it could hardly be assumed until kings and lords came into existence as created by Him. Still it will be of the first importance in His glorious appearing. Kings are earthly potentates, whereas "lords," we think, would cover heavenly as well as earthly dignitaries. In His appearing the Lord Jesus comes forth "to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3: 21). The many crowns, of which verse 12 speaks, being kingly diadems, are in keeping with this.

We have before us, then, "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3: 13). In our passage we have "the armies which were in heaven," representing the saints in a symbolic way. They ride upon white horses too, for the time is being ushered in when "the saints shall judge the world." Their "fine linen" raiment, "white and clean," identifies them with "the wife" of the Lamb, who was similarly adorned. The righteousnesses of the saints will be their adorning in the inside place when the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated. It will adorn them in the outside place also, when they are displayed to a wondering world with Christ in His glory.

It will be good at this point to read again chapter 16: 13-16. At Armageddon the kings of the earth and of the whole world are gathered

together to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. The armies of the earth gather to battle, but the armies of heaven have not to inflict one stroke. The decisive blow proceeds out of the mouth of their glorious Leader, like the stroke of a sharp sword. No man can stand before the incisive word that proceeds from the mouth of the Word of God. By the might of His word all creation came into being. By the might of His word this warrior judgment will be inflicted. But redemption, which lies between these two, was not thus accomplished. No wonder-working word brought this to pass; nothing short of His own death and resurrection achieved it.

He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. But this, we judge, does not allude to the blood of His cross, but rather to what is predicted in Isaiah 63: 1-6, where His work of judgment is foreseen. When reading in the synagogue at Nazareth, the Lord Jesus closed the book before reaching "the day of vengeance of our God." In chapter 63 we have the words, "the day of vengeance is in Mine heart," and blood — that of His foes — is sprinkled upon His garments, when He treads the winepress alone. This is a work of judgment, as we saw when considering the end of chapter 16. The overthrow of men in their pride is to inaugurate a period when the nations are to be ruled with a rod of iron.

The eyes of John are now directed to an angel, who stands in the sun, a symbol setting forth supreme power. The clash between the might of proud men and the Christ, appearing in His glory, is about to take place. There is no doubt as to

the issue. The call of the angel to the fowls of heaven declares it in no uncertain terms. There may be kings and captains and mighty men and horses, but all of them will be but food for vultures. We may adopt the words of one of our poets, and give them a meaning beyond his thoughts,

"The tumult and the shouting  
dies,  
The captains and the kings  
depart."

Human pride and violence rise to their climax and are brought low. The leaders, who looked so imposing, depart to their doom.

In vision John sees the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together under the beast for the express purpose of making war against God, as represented by the heavenly Christ and His army. That mortal men, even in combination, should for one moment contemplate fighting against God might have seemed to us incredible not so long ago. We have lived however to see a day when the marvellous discoveries and inventions of men have so inflated them and turned their heads that not a few are imbued with just that spirit. Some years ago a Russian revolutionary leader boasted that, having disposed of Tsar and earthly authorities, they would deal with the Lord God in due time. So far had he travelled on the mental road which belittles God and glorifies man.

Verse 19, then, gives us the climax of this spirit. Verses 20 and 21 indicate the completeness of its overthrow. The two men in whom it had found its fullest expression are singled out for condign punishment

of a most extraordinary kind. In the "Babylon" of chapters 17 and 18 full-blown corruption was seen. In the beast, described in chapter 13, violence comes to a head. The "times of the Gentiles" finish with him, even as they began with the tyrant, Nebuchadnezzar. The false prophet we identify with the one our Lord predicted, saying, "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in His own Name, him ye shall receive" (John 5: 43). He is the false Messiah, the "idol" or "worthless" shepherd, who will be raised up "in the land," of whom Zechariah II: 15-17 speaks. An apostate Jew himself, he will be eagerly received by apostate Jews. On the political plane he will find it a paying proposition to play a secondary part to the great Gentile monarch, following the example of the Herodians, of whom we read in the Gospels.

Both these men are seized by the irresistible power of the Lord. No future day of judgment awaits them. Taken red-handed as leaders of the most violent, God-defying enterprise ever undertaken, they do not first pass into death — the dissolution of soul and body — but are flung direct into the burning lake. The language here, as throughout the book, is symbolic, no doubt, but it is terribly expressive of God's judgment in its searching power. The very word translated, "brimstone," has in it the thought of "divine fire." In Old Testament history two men were taken to heaven without passing through death. Here two men pass alive into hot damnation.

The mighty hosts, that follow the

two, are men that have received the mark of the beast and supported his enormous wickedness. They do not immediately share his fate. They die, smitten by the all-conquering word of Him who is the Word of God, that they may await their judgment in the great day of which the next chapter speaks. Their cases will be tried in solemn session. The sin of the two leaders is so outrageous and open that summary judgment can righteously be inflicted. The principle of it is seen in 1 Timothy 5: 24.

It is remarkable that while our Lord will deal personally with men, it is an angel, a spirit being, who will deal with the great spirit being, who is the originator of all the evil. He is described in a fourfold way so as to identify him without a doubt. As Satan he is the adversary. As the devil he is the accuser. He is the old serpent of the opening book of the Bible, and the dragon of the closing book. All through the ages his aim has been to "deceive the nations," as verse 3 of chapter 20 shows us. How effectively he has done so all history bears witness, and coming days will show even more disastrously.

His activities will reach their climax in provoking this climax of human corruption and violence, but only to fail ignominiously before the might of the Lord. He is to find himself bound and a prisoner in the abyss for a thousand years. The "great chain" necessary to bind him is in the angel's hand — symbolic language again, for no literal chain could bind a spirit being. The "bottomless pit" is not the lake of fire but the dungeon in which he is confined while the millennial age

runs its course. The seal of God is put upon him there by the angel's hand. It was an angel who broke the seal which men put on the sepulchre of the Lord Jesus.

The author of all the evil being dealt with, John turns to contemplate those who are blessed in association with Christ. Three distinct groups are mentioned. First comes those who are enthroned and to whom judgment is given. Daniel the prophet foresaw this great day, as he records in his seventh chapter. When the Ancient of days did sit, then the thrones were "cast down," or "set." But there is no mention of any who sat on them. In our passage the enthroned ones appear and are described by the simple pronoun "they." To whom does the pronoun apply? Where is the noun? We answer unhesitatingly it applies to "the armies in heaven," of the previous chapter, which were composed of "much people in heaven," covering both the wife of the Lamb — the Church — and those called to the marriage supper — the Old Testament saints.

The pronoun "they" covers, then, the saints who were raised and changed at the rapture, as to whom Paul asked the Corinthians, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" But another and much smaller class follows. There were those who, subsequent to the removal of the church, had suffered death for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God. Again, there were those who were martyred under the beast because they would not receive his mark. We have read of these two groups before. The former in chapter 6: 9-11; the latter in chapter 13: 15.

Both are now seen as living and reigning with Christ in the day of His glory.

Verse 4 indicates, then, that all the saints who suffer death between the coming of the Lord for His saints and His coming with them will be raised when He does come in His glory. In that risen life they will reign with Him, while those who did receive the mark of the beast and worship him will suffer the dreadful penalties described in chapter 14: 9-11.

There is a sharp line of demarcation between verses 4 and 5. The one gives us the saints in risen life and power. The other speaks of "the rest of the dead," who remain in their graves during the thousand years. Then, referring back again to verse 4, comes the remark, "This is the first resurrection." This is corroboration of the fact that the "they," at the opening of verse 4, indicated the saints raised, as prophesied in 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17. It also establishes quite clearly that "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5: 29), are separated by a thousand years.

Verse 6 also makes it abundantly clear that only those who are blessed and holy have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, though it has over those who are left for the second resurrection. Their blessedness is described in a twofold way. It is not that they enter into things entirely new in their character, for even now Christ has "made us kings and priests unto God and His Father" (chap. 1: 6), and in chapter 5 the twenty-four elders were

presented in those characters. Here, however, what the saints have been made, and which is known now to our faith, comes into full display in the millennial age.

Still, there is one new feature here. They are "priests . . . of Christ; it is really "of the Christ." Nowhere else does this expression occur, and it reminds us of Aaron and his sons in Exodus 29, who, when together, typified the saints as a priestly company. The sons of Aaron were priests of God and of Aaron — if we may so say. The risen saints will be manifested as priests of God and of the Christ, as taking their character and place entirely from Him. And they will share in His kingly reign.

Verse 6 gives us in brief summary the power and blessedness of the millennial age on its heavenly side. More instruction is granted us when we come to the latter part of chapter 21, but still it is as to the

heavenly side of it, just mentioning "the nations of them that are saved," and "the kings of the earth," but giving us no details as to the earthly blessings enjoyed in that delightful age. Such details were not needed here as they had been fully given in Old Testament scripture.

We know that the earth will rejoice and prosper under the benificent reign of Christ; that it will be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. Let Psalm 72 be considered for there we see Christ as the priestly King, absolute in His rule but sustaining the poor and needy. In Revelation we are let into the secret of how He will dispense His power and goodness through His heavenly saints — even such as ourselves.

Do we really believe it? If we do it will take the shine out of the present age through which we pass, and out of all its achievements.

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## What does it all mean?

What means this restlessness in the elements above us — the storms, the cyclones, the shaking in the heavens? What means the sighing of the troubled peoples — the wars, the rumours of wars? What means the upheaval on earth — this great unrest? What means the distress of nations — the famines, the pestilences, the destructions? It is creation crying for a new and better age. (See Rom. 8: 22-23).

Listen! and you will hear the voice of God in these things, telling us we are nearing the end of a swiftly departing age and announcing the approach of a glorious day, but one that is to be introduced through dire judgments. "Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night." (Isa. 21: 11, 12).

The world's dark night will end in glory for the believer. "Behold, the Lord cometh." Lift up your heads, O ye saints of the Lord!

# THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

A. J. POLLOCK.

**B**ELIEVERS on the Lord Jesus Christ are brought into the kingdom of heaven, and they are also a part of the assembly of God. A few thoughts gleaned from the Word of God, as to the place each occupies, and the distinction between the two, may be helpful.

**When did the kingdom of heaven begin?** It began through the sowing of the good seed of the kingdom by the Lord Jesus when here on earth. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man" (Matt. 13: 37).

**When did the assembly of God begin?** It began on the great day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit of God, "the promise of the Father," was given, indwelling each believer, linking up each with Christ in glory, and with each other as members of the body of Christ.

**Why is the kingdom of heaven so named?** Because it describes the rule of heaven upon this earth, which rule is vested in Christ, who was presented as King to the Jewish nation, and as Son of Man with universal dominion. To have a kingdom you must have a king, and there could be no kingdom of heaven till the heavenly King arrived, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Why is the assembly of God so named?** As a matter of fact, in this connection the word "assembly," does not occur in our English Bible. The Greek word, *ekklesia*, meaning that which is called out, is always in this connection translated

by the word, church. As designating all true saints upon the earth, or those gathered in a locality, the word, assembly, is to be preferred. The word, church, has taken on meanings that are not Scriptural, whilst the word, assembly, has a simplicity about it, meaning in this connection believers gathered together as the dwelling place of God by His Spirit.

**Why were the Old Testament saints not in the kingdom of heaven?** Because the kingdom of heaven did not exist in Old Testament times. It is true that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4: 26); that is, that God as Creator and in His governmental ways is controlling things behind the scenes; but one verse of Scripture proves clearly what we assert. We refer to the words of our Lord, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11: 11).

If John was the greatest born of women, and the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he, it is evident he was not in the kingdom of heaven, though greatly favoured as being chosen to be the forerunner of the King. If John was not in the kingdom, all that went before him were clearly not in it.

**What is the sphere of the kingdom of heaven?** The world, we reply. We read our Lord's own words: "He that soweth the good seed is

the Son of man ; **the field is the world** ; the good seed are the children of the kingdom ; but the tares are the children of the wicked one " (Matt. 13: 37, 38). It is in the world that the true subjects of the kingdom of heaven have the privilege of being loyal to their absent King.

**What is the sphere of the assembly of God?** It is in the world, but not of the world. 1 Corinthians 5: 12 speaks of a "within" (the assembly) ; and a "without" (the world). A picture of where the assembly is can well be illustrated by the well known verse, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst . . . Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (John 20: 19, 20).

Not now can we welcome the actual presence of the Lord in bodily form, but we have His word, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 20). The presence of the Lord and the power of the Spirit of God characterize the assembly.

**What is meant by a phrase, we often hear, "the kingdom of heaven IN MYSTERY"?** The Lord Jesus presented Himself to Israel as their King. They met all His approaches with hatred and scorn, and in the end rejected His claims, and crucified Him between two malefactors. The Sermon on the Mount is the address of the King to His subjects in view of the state of things then developing. The Kingdom of heav-

en in its true character lies in the hearts and lives of the Lord's people, who are rejected, as their Master was, and have no place in this world.

The recent underground movements in Europe may illustrate the expression "the kingdom in mystery." When France was in the hands of the Germans, loyal Frenchmen united in an underground movement in view of the day when France openly and publicly should be free and acknowledged by the world. So true believers today are in a kingdom, while the King is rejected, and they are to live their lives in view of that kingdom being **in display**. Read Matthew 5, 6 and 7 with this thought in mind. The Kingdom of heaven being in mystery means the Kingdom is not in display — the King is absent, and His subjects are in a world that cast Him out.

**What is meant by the kingdom IN DISPLAY?** The day will come when Israel will acknowledge the Lord as their King, when He will reign over His ancient people, and over the nations of the whole earth as the Son of Man. Then will be ushered in the thousand years' reign of Christ, commonly called the Millennium. Read from Zechariah 12: 9 to the end of the book as to this. Thus will come the kingdom of heaven in display.

**How is it we sometimes read of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, and sometimes of the KINGDOM OF GOD?** The expression, kingdom of heaven, only occurs in Matthew's gospel, where it is nearly always viewed as a sphere of outward profession. In the gospels of Mark and Luke we

have the expression, kingdom of God, repeatedly. In some cases the context leads to the plain conclusion that it refers to the same as the kingdom of heaven, whereas in other Scriptures it plainly refers to the REAL character of the kingdom. In the gospel of John the kingdom of God is seen in its real character, for new birth is necessary for the seeing of and the entering into the kingdom of God (John. 3: 3, 5).

The real power of it is brought before us in Romans 14: 17:— “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

**What is meant by the kingdom of God being viewed DISPENSATIONALLY?** If you read Matthew 13, you find a prophetic outline given by our Lord as to the form the kingdom of heaven would take.

The sowing by our Lord of the good seed of the kingdom only produced good results. But the kingdom is committed to the responsibility of man whilst the King is absent, and this is what is meant by the kingdom of heaven being viewed dispensationally. So soon do we see failure occurring in that which was committed to man. The enemy quickly got to work. We read: “While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way” (Matt. 13: 25).

The wheat symbolize the true children of the kingdom, and the tares the children of the wicked one. It was a master-stroke of the enemy to introduce false professors among the true subjects of the kingdom. The question arose at once—should the false be rooted up? The

answer was that both should grow together till the time of the harvest, that is at the end of the age, when the Lord shall separate them by His angels.

**Does this show that Christians ought to allow the false with the real in the assembly of God?** We know that it is sometimes argued from this that it is allowable that believer and unbeliever shall take the Lord's supper together without question. But this is decidedly not so. The wheat and tares are in the field, **the world**. The assembly is composed of true Christians. The Apostle, John, speaking of the anti-christs of his day, said, “They went out from us, but **they were not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2: 19).

Scripture bids us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. This is a general exhortation, but how much more so in the sacred association of the assembly of God. Even a believer, who is guilty of wickedness, has to be excommunicated, so that the assembly may be maintained in purity (1 Cor. 5), so no unconverted person should knowingly be allowed in outward fellowship with the assembly of God.

**What further developments are foreseen in the parables of the kingdom of heaven?** The next parable, that of the mustard seed, predicts that the unreal element allowed in the Christian profession would seek earthly fame and glory. We see it in gorgeous buildings and vast worldly organizations, seen at their

highest point in the world-dominating pretensions of the Church of Rome, which would seek to make its head the dictator of kings and princes.

This is followed by the parable of the woman secretly putting leaven in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. Has there not been all down the ages the constant effort of the enemy to mix up falsehood with pure Christian teaching? What do we find today? Many a theological college is poisoning the minds of its students, teaching them the Bible is not fully inspired, denying the story of the creation of man as found in Genesis I, and teaching that man is derived from an ape and upward bound, hence no need for the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ: denying indeed all the foundations of the faith. Surely we are within sight of the great apostasy foretold in Scripture. All this happily finds no place in Christian assemblies true to the Word of God.

**Surely evil is not going to triumph at the end?** Most assuredly not. These three parables that show the form the kingdom of heaven would take **as committed to the responsibility of men**, are followed by three more parables, which show that God is occupied with the good, and the good will be seen in all its glory when the harvest comes, and the kingdom is made manifest. The parable of the treasure hid in the field sets forth doubtless all the good, that is the result of God's dealing in blessing with men, including saints of other times than our own, which is not yet publicly displayed.

The next parable tells of a man seeking goodly pearls, and finding

one of great price, selling all that he had and buying it. There was one object above all others for which Christ died, and that was the assembly, or church, of God. We read: "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5: 25-27).

This emphasizes the fact that the Christian belongs to both the kingdom of heaven and the assembly of God. The third parable shows the servants occupied with the good and the bad cast away.

**When will the course of the assembly of God on earth be completed?** At the second coming of our Lord FOR His heavenly saints as told us in 1 Thess. 4: 13-18. Then the assembly will enter into the fulfilment of all the glory to which the Lord has called it. We believe that coming is drawing very near.

**When will the course of the kingdom of heaven on earth be completed?** We read that those who are Christ's will be raised at His coming and, "THEN COMETH THE END, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15: 24, 25).

It is clear that not till after the great uprising of rebellion at the end of the Millennium will this Scripture be fulfilled. Then Christ's work of Mediatorship will be completed, and the kingdom will be handed back that God may be all in all.

The conduct enjoined upon us, in view of our being in both the assembly and the kingdom, must occupy us on another occasion.

## SON OF DAVID AND SON OF GOD.

. . . I do confess that this view of the divers glories of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Son of David and Son of God, thus distinguishing the proper characteristic purpose of each dispensation, Jewish and Christian, leads me very distinctly to the conclusion, that the Church of the New Testament saints is not to concern itself with the regulations of the earth ; that it comes down from its only due position, as ascended into heaven with its Head, when it links itself with the powers and authorities of the world for the purpose of managing the world's interests, or preserving its good order. For her Head, to whom and to whose position she is to witness, we must still repeat it, is not on earth, but in heaven ; and is not directly undertaking for the present, the management of a kingdom which is of this world. Nor will He, until He regain dominion of Israel, and be seated on the throne of David, His only recognized organ of **earthly** power and rule. But He is not in this position yet, " Now is My kingdom not from hence."

. . . Israel gave up their testimony to their Head on earth, by losing their separate place as God's nation, acknowledging other lords than Jehovah, and selling themselves to the kingdoms of the Gentiles ; the Church gives up her testimony to her Head in heaven, by settling herself down in the earth, and combining with the powers and principles of the world, too ungraciously forgetful that her blessed suffering Lord was cast out by the world, and given no place on earth.

Many, " beloved of the Lord," are found in a system which professedly makes the Church the minister of civil order ; the state, in return, the patron of the Church. This is clearly in my judgment, an unwarranted condition for the Church to be found in ; and thus, as far as the influence of this judgment extends, I am necessarily separated from them. I might speak of much in the details of the same system, from which I feel constrained to withdraw myself, being, as I judge, anti-scriptural, and not merely non-scriptural ; such as the Church requiring her ministers to recognize all her baptized children as dying equally in the true hope of eternal life ; but it is not my wish or purpose to go into any such details, but to state simply this one foundation principle.

But then how am I to view this separation? How am I to be affected by it? When I say, as unfeignedly I do, that in many things they honour their Lord and love Him with a constant and fervent love, how dare I view it or how can I be affected by it, but as a cause of much humiliation before our common Lord and Master, and with great sorrow of heart? With many of them, if they will let me thus claim with them sympathy in Jesus, I take constant and most sweet counsel, and do confess that their Christian spirit and deportment will at times make me pause and ask myself, could I be right in formally withdrawing from public recognized communion with such saints of God? But then the scripture of truth,

which is to be the rule rather than the suggestions of our affections, never brings me to this pause, or awakens a doubt of the untenableness of their position, and therefore though we have many brethren to love, we have but one Lord to obey.

. . . But if I do thus honour these brethren, who are still in the Establishment, as among the Lord's dearest and most honoured servants in this day of ours, can I allow myself in any thing that may appear to be a rejoicing in, or exulting because of this separation? Can I say of any given communion, to the exclusion of these brethren, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these"? Assuredly I could not do so. I could not adopt any judgment that would thus have them on the outside. But I must at the same time say, that I do not feel indebted to the system with which these brethren are connected for the Christian zeal and temper which grace them . . . .

And while I thus clearly and thankfully acknowledge what is of the Lord's spirit in these brethren, I will also acknowledge, that, because the world in its spirit and practice, has been so much retained, while separation from it, in its religious services, has been so formally adopted, little of the blessing and power of God does now rest on those who are now called dissenters. We are all weak, by reason of much unfaithfulness; much individual personal unfaithfulness from all of

us more or less, "seeking their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." And will not these things, in the judgment of the Lord, overweigh correct ideas and clear views, as they are too often boasted to be, of the nature and government of a Christian Church? What are correct ideas and clear views, "being alone"? There is such a thing, as by the letter and circumcision, the transgressing of the law. What spirit can God recognize with His blessing in such a state of things as the present, of weakness as respects the saints individually, and of distraction as respects them together, but that of sighing and crying, that of sympathy with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem? . . .

Let us embrace **all** who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, lest we be keeping ourselves out of the scope and range of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, for peace is pronounced on all such. Let us cease from judging one another, and rather set ourselves to exhort one another to love and to good works, reminding one another that if we sow bountifully, we shall also reap bountifully. Let our hope enter that within the vail, let us cast our anchor there, and wish for the day, the day of the Lord, remembering that unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.

Extracted from

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Be still my soul, those anxious cares  
To thee are burdens, thorns and snares,  
They cast dishonour on Thy Lord  
And contradict His gracious Word.

# THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

W. H. WESTCOTT.

From a Meditation on Ephesians 4: 1-6

**I**T IS evident from the exhortation in verses 1 to 3 of this passage that the spirit in which we consider our subject of "the unity of the Spirit" is an urgent qualification. May God grant that we may first judge ourselves in respect of any tendency to harshness or ungraciousness; and also in regard to placing our earlier conceptions of that unity above anything that the Spirit would teach us through the Scripture.

The words in italics at the commencement of verse 4 (i.e., "There is") are better omitted. The seven details which follow are not a statement of dogma or doctrine, but rather give us a complete picture of that unity of the Spirit which we are to endeavour to keep.

The unity of the Spirit is a unity formed by the Spirit of God, and maintained by the Spirit's power alone. It certainly includes all true believers on our Lord Jesus Christ in this Christian dispensation. But here they are not viewed as a mere aggregate of individuals who are forgiven sinners, but as a vast number of souls in whom there is distinguishable the work of the Spirit of God. There is still the flesh in every one of them; but in the unity of the Spirit no flesh is included. They are seen therefore, from the point of view of what the Spirit has wrought in them — "the Spirit is life" (Rom. 8: 10). There is a new life and nature wrought in them, distinct from what they were as born of Adam. What they were in

Adam has been entirely set aside in the death of Christ, and what they are in Christ Jesus is wholly new and there is nothing of Adam or of the flesh carried into it. They are the same individuals, but viewed as men of a new race in Christ, and as having a new life in the Spirit. It is when viewed in this life and nature that the Scripture speaks of them as brought into the unity of the Spirit, which unity we are to use diligence to keep. No thought or word or deed that emanates from the flesh or from man in Adam has any part or lot in that. In the new creation "all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5: 16-18).

## ONE BODY

In considering the unity of the Spirit, its features or elements, this is the first thing; that Christians all the world over are one body (Romans 12: 4, 5). A number, or multiplicity of bodies, is unknown in, and is foreign to, the unity of the Spirit. To form Christians into parties or organizations of any kind whatsoever may be done in ignorance or wilfulness; or with evident zeal in promoting a cause, or furthering a service or upholding a doctrine; but whatever the motive, it is dividing them into sections and is contrary to keeping the unity of the Spirit. A "national church" for example is necessarily an organization affecting one nationality as distinct from other nations. A church, carrying the name as identified with a person or place or system of worship, in its very essence is contrary to the unity of the Spirit. That Chris-

tians are in it may be true, and that their being in does not invalidate them as Christians is also true ; but to be in it or to join it is not using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This unity is not on a national basis, as though comprising only those of one nation, nor is it on an international basis as though arriving at some common and international agreement among Christians. It is a unity of the Spirit, but the grace that saves them constitutes them members by the reception of the Spirit. They have not to join one Body, they have not to agree to become one Body ; but they are one Body. It is not thus a voluntary association, but an organic formation by the work of the Spirit. To be consistent with the fact is our business ; not to form one Body but to be consistent with it.

It is by one Spirit that we are all baptised into one Body, and together we all form the Body of CHRIST. The body of any creature is formed for the outward expression of the life within. Christ in Heaven is our life ; and the one Body is His Body, composed of all its members the world wide, and is a vessel in which He expresses Himself in His life and ways here on earth.

### ONE SPIRIT

Indwelling the one Body there is one Spirit, He of whom the Lord spoke in John 14: 16, 17. He is a Divine Person, equal with the Father and the Son, who can be in every saint, and also indwell the whole Church of God on the earth. The conviction of our sin has been

His work ; we are born again of the Spirit. By Him we have our knowledge and enjoyment of the love of God ; our experience of deliverance ; our enlightenment ; the formation of our nature and character in Divine life ; our acquaintance with Christ and of all the truth concerning the Father and the Son, and also our place in the Assembly. All is His work in us and there is but ONE SPIRIT whose operations are ONE and the same in all saints everywhere all the world over. He glorifies CHRIST in Christ's body.

### ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING

Our calling is one. It is the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3: 14). It is a holy calling (2 Tim. 1: 9). It is a heavenly calling (Heb. 3: 1). It is a calling which takes us out of earthly associations, for it is not of earth but entirely of that which relates to heaven. At the same time, while it gives us a new citizenship in heaven, we are instructed to be subject to the powers that be on earth.

In our calling we have new bonds and relationships so that, whether Jews or Gentiles, we are now joint heirs of a joint body and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel. It produces a common bond, stronger than any other bond and binds us into one common interest, giving us one common object, however diverse we have been naturally in rank, attainment, privilege or colour. It is not yet perfected fully in accomplishment, for we are to be with CHRIST where He is and like Him, but the

HOPE of its complete fulfilment is a hope common to us all.

### ONE LORD

The unity of the Spirit gives us to be under one Lord. This forbids us, in Divine things, to own any other Lord and certainly not to call any man such. Ecclesiastical dignitaries in some bodies are addressed as "My Lord." Wherever this is done, it is losing sight of and setting aside, the unity of the Spirit which knows only one Lord.

His is the title as risen and exalted by God (Acts 2: 36). By Divine decree every knee must bow to Him; every tongue confess Him, Lord (Phil. 2: 11). We who believe in Him now are brought to confess Him (Rom. 10: 9) to our eternal salvation. We prove His power and authority in all details of our life. He, as such, is our present Saviour. To us there is one Lord (I Cor. 8: 6). The Assembly is under His administration in each and every place (I Cor. 12: 5). His authority exercised in one locality is binding in all places, for the unity of the Spirit recognises but one Lord in all localities. His will commands obedience, but it is the obedience of love, for who amongst His own does not love the Lord and, if loved, no less honoured. There are many voices in the world, but our ears are open to one supreme voice. His protection is sufficient: His word is authoritative.

### ONE FAITH

The unity of the Spirit maintains all saints in one faith. It is "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (James 2: 1). It is not

a blend of the faiths of the world at which some professing Christians aim. It is unique. It is not a development of religious science, an outcome of philosophic thought.

It is based upon miracles:

The intervention of Divine power in the midst of a world of sin,

The incarnation of the Son of God,

The revelation of God in a Man,

The cross and death of Jesus,

The resurrection,

are all Miracles. The glorification of the Man Christ Jesus; the coming of the Holy Spirit from Heaven, forming believers on the ascended Christ into one Body; the Gospel concerning Him, so adapted in its perfection to any and every child of Adam in every land; these are all unique. The calling of the Church, its equipment, its resources, its functions are incomparably blessed as set out in the Christian faith. The return of the Lord Jesus in power — so imminent — whether in the first instance to fetch the Church out of the world, or in the second instance to institute His Kingdom over the world as prophesied ages ago, is clearly included in the one faith. The blessedness of the knowledge of God, revealed as Father and all His counsels too with regard to Christ His Son, may well impress our hearts and minds with the magnificence and comprehensiveness of the One Faith, outside and independent of all the "faiths" of the world. It is utterly exclusive of any assimilation to any other faiths or co-opera-

tion with them. It is the TRUTH and stands alone, impregnable as God Himself.

### ONE BAPTISM

The one baptism is necessarily Christian baptism and is our committal to all that is involved in the truth of Christ Jesus (Romans 6: 3). It announces our identification with the death of our Lord Jesus Christ in all its bearings and implies our obligation to walk in newness of life. The water under which we are passed is an emblem of death and an understanding of our identification with Christ dead and risen again, teaches us that we are no more at liberty to be under sin's dominion, no more available for sin's control. He — Christ — lives unto God; every pulsation, every movement of His risen manhood is Godward, for the accomplishment of God's will and pleasure.

We likewise esteem ourselves to be alive in Christ Jesus to GOD. Living under new control, only for the will of God (Romans 6: 11). He, in His death, has died out of this world system, working out the eternal purpose of God. Deliverance from the time system, this world's system, is also our privilege, though for a period still having relationships, business, privileges here and responsibilities to fulfil — being permitted to be FOR GOD in them, but with our minds set on things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God (Colossians 3: 1).

### ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

The unity of the Spirit, in which we have our place and privilege even now, is in view of the completion of the whole scheme of God which He has designed for His eternal pleasure and complacency.

We are saved and blessed in Christ — not alone as a matter of mercy and philanthropy, but with a view to the setting out before all worlds and for eternity the ineffable blessedness of God's character; of the delight it is to Him to bless and of His purpose to surround Himself with a universe where everything will exhibit His attributes and with creatures redeemed and blessed, made capable of intelligent response to His love, wisdom and power and glory. He will be known as GOD indeed by all, supreme, purposeful, irresistible, triumphant, blessed beyond words, the vast creation rejoicing in the light of all that God is.

But in the unity of the Spirit He is known to us, not as God only, but also as FATHER, over all as God supreme, through all, over-ruling all conditions incidental to our time state, to the furtherance of His own designs, and in **us** all, whom He has given to Christ, sharers of His risen life, acceptance, relationship and inheritance.

We know Him who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

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He bids thee not thy strength to use—  
That were but mockery indeed,  
Oft weakest vessels He doth choose  
And from His store supplies their need.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 20: 7 — 21: 8).

**T**HE Millennial age will be characterized by righteous yet beneficent rule. At the end of the ages of sinful misrule by men, with all their attendant miseries, there is to be displayed the excellence and glory of Divine rule, under Christ as Son of Man and King of Israel. Yet sin will not be entirely absent, as Isaiah 65: 20 shows.

Moreover, during the thousand years human life on earth will continue as at present and multitudes will be born as the years pass, and the Lord's words, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," will be as true then as now. If a work of grace does not take place in the hearts of such, all the old fleshly tendencies will be there, repressed only by Divine rule from without; Satan, the instigator of evil, not being there to work upon them. This accounts for the solemn facts of verse 8, which otherwise might seem inexplicable.

At the end of the millennium Satan is to be released from his prison and allowed to work his will. He has learned nothing and received no correction. He is absolutely unchanged. Out he goes at once, again to deceive the nations. Men of Adam's race, apart from the new birth, are unchanged also, in spite of having lived for centuries under a regime of absolute righteousness. In the Gospel we have learned that, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8: 7, 8).

Hence nothing but a new birth will do. This will again be shown in striking fashion at the close of the millennium. Men in the flesh cannot please God, and God and His righteous rule does not please them. So at the first opportunity, when instigated, they rebel.

Out of all nations the rebels come, though "Gog and Magog" are specially designated. Ezekiel 38 and 39 predict the destruction of this great northern power as the millennial age begins — the last stroke, it would appear, of the great Armageddon conflict. A thousand years have passed, but again we find the representatives of that power taking a leading part in the anti-God movement. The great Russian territories are pretty clearly indicated in the chapters in Ezekiel, and even in our day the anti-God spirit seems to have come to a head there. Their objective is the camp of the saints and the beloved city, in the centre of which will stand the Temple of God, whence will proceed both the authority and the blessing of the millennial age. It is unadulterated rebellion against God. It merits condign punishment, and it gets it.

Fire from heaven devours them, and this dreadful episode brings to a close the millennial age and all the ages of time, so that we stand on the threshold of the eternal state. Our chapter goes on to relate God's acts in the judgment of sin, both governmental and eternal. There is no mention of what happens to the material earth (save that "earth and the heaven fled away"), until

the first verse of the next chapter is reached, and then we are only told that the first heaven and earth have "passed away." We have to refer to 2 Peter 3: 7, 10, for more precise details, and then we discover that fire is to be the agent used for that. So it may very well be that this falling of fire from heaven to devour the rebels is also the act of God which releases the atomic forces which will produce what Peter predicts.

The last six verses of our chapter give us the results of God's last judgments; not the material side of them but the moral and spiritual. The fountain-head of all evil is first dealt with. In all the wide universe, that the Scriptures reveal to us, Satan was the original rebel. Into this world he introduced sin by way of deceit. His name, **devil**, means **accuser, culumniator**, and by his calumnies against God and His word he deceived Eve, as Genesis 3 bears witness. As a mighty spiritual being, possessing powers of intelligence vastly beyond anything human, he has no difficulty in deceiving fallen men. He is doing it to-day, and will do it to the end. But the limit determined by Omnipotence is now reached, and he is cast into that "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," of which the Lord spoke in Matthew 25: 41. Here the fire is spoken of as a lake, which gives the idea of a place circumscribed and confined. Into it the beast and the false prophet were cast as the millennial age began, and now at the end of that age we read that there they still "**are,**" and not that they **were**. The fire had not destroyed them.

We are well acquainted with fire

and its effects in material objects; but, as far as we know, it has no effects on spiritual beings. We judge therefore the phrase to be symbolic, as so much else in this book, but it stands as the symbol of the hot displeasure, the scorching judgment of God, which even for the devil will mean that he "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

The originator of sin and his two chief lieutenants being disposed of, the great mass of sinful mankind, who have fallen a prey to his deceptions, now appear at the final assize. The language is deeply solemn and impressive. John sees the throne of judgment, which he describes as great and white. The second resurrection, that of damnation, has taken place, and the earth has fled away. This earth is but a tiny spot in God's great universe and all the limitations which it would impose upon this scene are gone. In result, "the dead, small and great, stand before God." They have been raised and reclothed in bodies, as verse 13 clearly indicates, but they are still the dead in a spiritual sense — dead towards God.

The One who will sit on that throne, from whose face the very earth and heaven will flee, inasmuch as they have been defiled by sin, must be our Lord Jesus Christ, since, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5: 22). His face was **once** marred more than that of any man. In it **now** there shines the glory of God. **Then** it will be characterized by the penetrating understanding of omniscience, and the severity of a judgment which springs from righteousness and holiness, of which the white-

ness of the throne is a symbol.

Yet the judgment will not be apart from the divine records, nor apart from their works. It will be based not on what God knew them to be but on what they had manifested themselves to be in their outward actions. Of those actions a record had been kept before God. It is remarkable that the Old Testament as it closes should speak of "a book of remembrance" written before the Lord in favour of **the godly**: the New Testament at the close speaking of "the things written in the books," on which **the ungodly** are condemned. In recent years men have discovered how to record human speech and actions in such a way as to preserve them for future generations. What they are learning to do imperfectly God has done in perfection through the ages. A terrifying thought for the sinful sons of men!

About three-quarters of the earth's surface is sea. If any of the dead could be overlooked in that hour, it would be some who found their burial in its wide expanse and its immense depths. But the sea will give them up. Death is viewed as having held men's bodies and "hell" or "hades," had held their souls. Both yield up their prey that soul and body may be reunited. They had sinned in their bodies, and in their bodies they will be condemned. Again it is emphasized — "every man according to their works."

At that time death and hades will contain only the **unsaved**, so that verse 14 records the solemn fact that all that they contain will find their place in the lake of fire, and thus

death and hell will disappear. Neither of these two were marked by finality: each was a provisional arrangement, and now they come to an end. Verse 15 states the same terrible fact in another way. If the record of "the books" condemned men in a positive way, the "book of life" did so in a negative way. If their names were **not** there, it sealed their doom.

From these dreadful scenes John lifts his eyes to behold scenes of everlasting felicity in a new heaven and a new earth. In our present earth the sea is the great dividing element, and into its salt water flow the impurities created by man in his sinful state, and they are rendered harmless. It will not be needed in that blissful day when the impurities and the divisions are no more. The first eight verses of chapter 21 give us, then, the eternal state, which will succeed the millennial age, and abide.

Its chief feature will be God dwelling with men in His tabernacle, which is identified with the holy city the new Jerusalem, which city is likened to "a bride prepared for her husband." This might seem a strange mixture of symbols did we not remember that we have already, in chapters 17 and 18, seen that which falsely claims to be the church represented as great Babylon and as a seducing woman — a harlot. In this new Jerusalem we have in symbol the church of God, which is the bride of Christ. It descends "from God," since it is altogether His workmanship, and it comes "out of heaven," for its calling was from heaven, and to heaven it had gone at the coming of the Lord Jesus for all His saints.

In that eternal order of things the prominent thoughts are GOD and MEN. The Persons of the Godhead are not thrown into prominence, though of course they are there, just as They were enfolded in the **Elohim**, translated God, in Genesis 1: 1. Distinctions amongst men, such as nations, only came in as the result of sin, so here they disappear. It was ever in the purpose of God to dwell with men; an indication of this being found in Proverbs 8: 31. When man was created in innocence the Divine approach did not go further than a visitation, "in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3: 8). When in type Israel was redeemed from Egypt, God took up His abode on the tabernacle in their midst. Now by the Spirit the church is His habitation. In the eternal state His desire to dwell will be finally accomplished; and it will be in fullest measure — **the dwelling of "God Himself."**

The holy city is called "the **tabernacle** of God," thus directing our thoughts to the earliest type of God dwelling amongst His people. Two words in the New Testament are translated "temple." One signifies the whole of the sacred buildings and the other the inner sanctuary only. The first word is never used in the Revelation; always the second. So in chapter 15: 5, we get, "the temple of the tabernacle;" that is, the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle. Again later in our chapter we read that there is no inner sanctuary in the heavenly city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the inner sanctuary of it. This may help us to understand why tabernacle rather than temple is the suitable word in the verse we are

considering, though in Paul's epistles the church is called the temple (inner sanctuary) of God.

All God's redeeming activities have been in view of His dwelling, and then, having taken up His abode, He exerts His power in blessing. Very little is said however as to the positive side of this. It seems to be summed up in two facts. First, that men will dwell in the presence of God. Second, that they will be in relationship with Him as sons, and thus as overcomers inherit all things. But how much is involved in these simple facts! To know God and dwell before Him in a near relationship must exceed in its blessedness even the inheriting of all things.

Verse 4 gives us the blessing on its negative side, and this we can understand more easily. The things that will never enter those blissful scenes are all painfully familiar to us at present. We know them only too well! We may remark that the "crying" is not the same as the "tears." It means "outcry," and the world is full of that today. Cries of dissatisfaction, resentment and threatening fill the air. All the five things mentioned are the fruits of sin. As men multiply on the face of the earth the volume of them increases. The advent of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom will largely assuage them, but they will never be wholly and for ever abolished until the eternal state is reached. And then, God Himself will do it. His hand it will be — sweet thought! — that wipes the tear from every eye.

In the eternal state everything will be new in the fullest sense of the

word. The material heavens and earth will be new, and "all things" found therein will be new according to verse 5. All those things that we know at present, spoken of as "the former things" will have passed away. He who acts, to produce these new creation things, is "He that sat upon the throne," — our Lord Jesus Christ. He acted to bring into existence the old creation, according to Genesis 1. He acts again to bring into existence the new. As before, so here, the word of His power is sufficient. Formerly, "He spake, and it was done" (Psa. 33: 9). Now again He speaks and His words are, "**It is done.**" Both are accomplished with equal ease.

But we must never forget what lay between these two points. Redemption had to be accomplished, and far more than His word was needed for that. Apart from redemption and its wonderful fruits the new creation scenes and blessings would lack a solid foundation.

He who sits upon the throne asserts the fulness of His Deity, for no one but God can be the A and the Z — as we should speak — the beginning and end of all things. In this light He presented Himself to John, speaking as One who dwells in the eternal present, above and beyond all questions of time. But at the end of the verse He again speaks in view of time conditions, for thirst is not something that characterizes the eternal state. Thirst is a symbol of unsatisfied desire, and that eminently marks the present time. For the thirsty there is still the water of life, which springs up like a fountain and is freely given. Such is the grace of our God, persisting to the end.

From the grace of verse 6 we pass to the overcoming of verse 7. At first sight it looks like a complete change, but after all, no one does overcome save those who have received the grace. This is the last mention of overcoming, or victory, in the book, which, as we before remarked, is the book of victory. The victorious saint will enter into full possession of the inheritance, but no saint at all would overcome had not the Lamb prevailed (same word), as we see in chapter 5.

The terrible import of verse 8 is apparent. It stands in contrast to the victors in verse 7, and in both verses we are carried outside the bounds of time and into the endless expanse of eternity. There is that confined region, burning with the holy judgment of God, which will be the second death to those that are cast there. The first death is not annihilation. If it were, there could be no second. It is dissolution of soul and body. The second death will be the complete and absolute dissolution of every link that connects with God; complete severance from all that is summed up in the words, **life and light and love.** There will be existence but not life in the full and proper sense of the word.

The list of those on whom this doom falls is sadly instructive. It begins with the fearful and unbelieving. Being without faith, they feared man and did not confess Jesus as their Lord. Those who bore the character of the devil, who is a murderer, and were marked by lust and traffic with the powers of darkness, come next. The list finishes with "all liars," for lying is another characteristic of the devil,

and deceit takes a variety of subtle forms. The overcomers of verse 7 are sons of God. The damned of verse 8 proclaim themselves as sons of the evil one. They share his doom.

Beyond the point we have reached, the Scripture does not carry us. An eternal state is some-

thing which lies beyond the compass of our minds. God then will be all in all, but no description of it in detail is given. Were it given it would be unintelligible to us in our present state. We may gather this from what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12: 4. We may find however deep instruction in what we are told.

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## ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT.

Has the word "generation" in Matthew 1: 1 any connection with the word "children" in Hebrews 2: 13?

— BELFAST.

As far as we know it has no connection at all. The two words in the original are entirely distinct. The word in Matthew is one which has been carried over almost exactly into English — **genesis**. This is remarkable. Directly we open the New Testament we have a new Genesis — not now the beginning of the Adamic race but the genesis of

Jesus Christ who though Son of David and Son of Abraham is born by the power and action of the Holy Ghost, and is Emmanuel—God with us.

The children whom God has given Him are of His race or order — "all of one" with Himself, but that is the fruit of His death and resurrection.

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## THE MORAL GLORY OF JESUS

"He is altogether lovely" (Song of Sol. 5: 16).

The more His intrinsic excellence, His moral perfectness was displayed, the more manifest it became that between Him and fallen man there was not one moral quality in common. It is not a question of degree,—a race on which one immeasurably out-distances another. No; it is contrast—of the most absolute kind. All that men value and seek, He declined and shunned. For all on which His heart was set, they had no relish whatever. Men seek their own glory—He sought His Father's alone. Men do their own will—His Father's was His only business. Men love those who resemble themselves and such as love them—He loved where there were no qualities He could approve, and where there was hatred to Himself which thirsted for His blood . . . Think of One who for the three and thirty years of His sojourn on earth never did one thing to serve Himself, spare Himself, exalt Himself; but for every moment of His life **was**, and **did**, and **spake**, and **thought**, and **felt**, exactly as God would have Him!

# THE CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT IN TWO SPHERES.

A. J. POLLOCK.

**T**HE Christian's conduct lies in two spheres, for he is in the kingdom of heaven, and in the assembly of God. These are not contradictory one to the other, but supplementary. The former has its place in the world; the latter sets us in relation to our fellow Christians.

As to our place and conduct in the kingdom of heaven, Christians are in a world that crucified the Lord of glory, whose god and prince is the Devil, and whose principles and maxims and practices are opposed to God. In this condition of things the Christian has to live in a world contradictory to God a life in accordance with his position in the kingdom of heaven.

What then is expected of those who are in the kingdom of heaven? A study of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7) will tell us. In it we are told that we are "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world." **Salt possesses a quality of arresting corruption,** and is a preservative. How right it is for a Christian in his relation in the world, in his workshop, or office, or shop, to act quietly in the fear of the Lord. It has been known that the quiet testimony of a Christian in his workshop has hindered swearing and impure talk, etc., the "salt" of a godly life having a salutary effect. What abundant room there is for sincere Christian lives in the world! How many have been converted through such testimony!

**Light makes manifest that which is evil.** "For every one that doeth

evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3: 20, 21). "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 5: 16). Note the emphasis is not put upon talking, but upon "your good works." Talking may effect little, but good works tell all along the line.

It is said that Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-shek was converted when he was nursed in a Missionary Hospital in China. He was so struck by the loving attentions that were given him, that at last he saw the motive behind it all, even love to the Lord, the absent King, on the part of the Christian nurses, ending in this happy result. Many have been won for the Lord by good works of this nature. By purity of thought and action testimony can be given. The whole of Christian activity can be summed up in the petition our Lord gave to His disciples, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6: 10).

Nor must the Christian resist evil, in the sense of seeking to put down evil by force. Whoever smites him on the right cheek, he must turn the other also; and if forced to go a mile, he must go an extra mile. Here was a new rule to love one's enemies. The Christian will find

himself in the world where he may be persecuted for righteousness' sake. For instance, John Wesley and his followers had plenty of experience of this in their day.

Then the practical outcome of faithfulness to the absent King is seen in our Lord's parable of the talents. We read in Matthew 25: 14-30 of a man going to a far country, and giving to his servants five talents, two talents, one talent, according to their several ability wherewith to trade in his absence. After a long time the lord of the servants returned, and reckoned with his servants. The one, to whom was entrusted five talents, announced that by trading he had made five talents. The one, to whom was entrusted two talents, announced that by trading he had made two talents. The lord of the servants in awarding rewards announced it to both these servants in identical language.

“ Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord ” (Matthew 25: 21).

At first sight we would think that the one, who had made five talents, should get a greater reward than the one who only gained two. But on further reflection one sees the justice of the rewards. Two things strike one. First it was the lord's discretion that gave to one five talents, and the other two. Second each **doubled** the capital he was entrusted with. There was no difference between them in this. From these reflections we gather the rewards were given on the ground of

fidelity, activity, devotedness, and therefore were the same.

This is cheering to many of us. Some are highly gifted, others less so, but equal reward can be gained. **Devotedness** is the keynote of this parable. How good it is that we should use what the Lord has given to us, whether it be much or little, and remember the warning of the servant, who had one talent, and buried it in the ground, taking no steps to put it to usury. He evidently was simply a professed servant, who did not have in the least the welfare of his lord at heart, and his end was outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Our Lord's parable of the pounds teaches a different lesson (Luke 19: 12-27). A certain nobleman went into a far country, but before doing so, he called together his ten servants, delivering to each a pound, wherewith to trade in his absence. When the nobleman returned he called his ten servants that he might know how much each had gained by trading. Note carefully each had a pound, each had the same opportunity. One servant tells how his pound had gained ten pounds. The reward given is,

“ Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over TEN cities ” (Luke 19: 17).

The second servant comes along, and tells how his pound has made five pounds. The reward given to him is to have authority over FIVE cities. Here there is a difference, one servant being rewarded by ten, another by five. But again on reflection we see the justice of

this. Evidently the one whose pound had gained ten pounds had been **twice** as diligent as the one, whose pound had gained five pounds.

What does the pound set forth? It is something that all the servants have in common. We all possess brain, speech, hands to work, feet for travel. We all have twenty-four hours in the day. Here is a call to diligence. One Christian covers more ground for the Lord than another, simply because he exhibits diligence and zeal in using the powers and opportunities that God has given to him. Again we have the warning of the one of the ten servants, who hid his pound in a napkin. Our Lord applies this parable most evidently to the Jewish nation, who refused Him, and sent a message after Him, that He should not reign over them. The centuries show how this has been fulfilled, for the Jewish nation is scattered among the nations.

In these two parables the Christian has much to ponder over and finds in them a call for devotedness, and the using of all his powers and opportunities for his absent Lord.

The Christian's conduct in the assembly of God is on a different plane. Though the individuals composing the assembly of God are on this earth, and live very much like everyone else, yet he moves in a sacred circle the world knows nothing about. On the first resurrection morning the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. The disciples were **inside**, and they soon had the wonderful joy of welcoming their risen Lord. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the

Lord" (John 20: 20). The Christian has the privilege of moving in the Christian circle. It is likewise the circle in which the Holy Spirit of God is. Christian fellowship is a wonderful thing, the only fellowship that passes from time into eternity.

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1: 9).

The closeness of this fellowship is seen in the various ways it is presented in Scripture. John's Gospel speaks of the one flock and the one Shepherd, setting forth the **care** the Lord takes of His own, and how the Shepherd is the gathering power, and not the Jewish fold with its legal walls. John's epistle speaks of the **family** character of relationship to God that the Christian has. The Apostle Peter speaks of the "new-born babes" desiring the sincere milk of the word; of "obedient children," and of believers as "strangers and pilgrims" in this world, abstaining from "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2: 11).

The Apostle Paul brings out yet fuller truth on these lines. The children of God form the temple of God, the dwelling place of God, in this world. The Tabernacle in the wilderness may set this forth typically, but the reality is not seen in buildings and ceremonies and vestments, but in believers associated together in the things of the Lord. The highest and closest of symbolical language is used to set forth the intimacy of the believer with the Lord, and with other members, when we have the figure of the one body — Christ the Head in heaven, saints forming

the one body on earth. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, linking him with Christ in glory, and with other members on earth.

“ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ” (Eph. 4: 4).

This is seen practically when Christians assemble to remember the Lord in His death, for prayer and ministry and edification, and when each walks in the Spirit, carrying out the new commandment, that we should love each other, so pressed upon our attention by the Apostle John.

## SUPERLATIVE THINGS.

A. H. STORRIE.

Condensed Notes of an Address at Bonskeid on Ephesians 3: 8, 19 ;  
2 Corinthians 9: 15 ; John 15: 13.

**I** PICKED up a book in a house where I was staying a few days ago, and in it I read some advice to preachers. Amongst other things, the writer gave three “ dont’s ” for the preacher to observe. He said: “ Don’t try to be clever.” Again: “ Don’t try to be funny.” In regard to the second “ don’t ” some of the methods of modern evangelists savour more of the Music Hall than of the Gospel Hall! The third “ don’t ” was “ Don’t talk about yourself.” While these are very good rules every rule has an exception. This meeting has something of a missionary flavour, so I will go so far as to relate two little incidents that I think may be helpful, especially to the young.

Many years ago a young man came along who was something of an artist and he painted a little seascape in my sister’s album. I can see it now, the sea and rocks and the sand on the shore. Then he wrote a couple of lines and these two little lines had something to do

with my serving the Lord abroad. They were these,

“ Only one life, t’will soon be  
past,  
Only what’s done for Christ will  
last.”

Then in the year 1915 I was under deep exercise about going to Brazil. I do not think anybody outside my own family knew anything about it. One Lord’s day morning I was walking up and down a strip of garden we had at the back of our house, and I noticed the household ladder was leaning against the wall, and stuck in the top rung of that ladder I saw a tract. It was “ In the days of thy youth,” by S. E. McNair. I read it through and I think it the best tract for young Christians I have ever read. As we have sung,

“ Life with its way before thee  
lies,  
Christ is the path and Christ  
the prize.”

Now in the Scripture I have read we are lifted into the realm of the superlative, and we ought never to think that it is an ordinary matter to be a Christian, and to bear the name of Christ before those who know Him not. The Apostle Paul, as we all know, was an outstanding Christian. He was the greatest missionary that ever went forth with the gospel, but his first characteristic, as we note in the verse in Ephesians 3, was deep humility.

The last time I was in Lisbon I went to prison as a visitor and saw our friend Alves Reis ; a converted criminal, a man who got a million pounds into his pocket which were not his. Two days after I visited the prison a great Roman Catholic Prelate visited the prison. He was the Cardinal, the chief representative of Rome in Portugal. He came in his gorgeous robes and the prisoners went down on their faces before him. Alves Reis did not but stayed on his feet, and the Cardinal had a long conversation with him. Now the Pope claims to be the successor of the apostles and here was his representative in proud magnificence. But the Apostle to the Gentiles says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." I have no doubt Paul was a good grammarian, but he does not use ordinary language as he gets down before his Lord, calling himself less than the least of all saints.

Then when he speaks of the love of Christ he says it surpasses knowledge ; and that is where the verse from John 15 comes in. The realm of the superlative indeed it is, because we see in the cross of our Lord

Jesus Christ love's crowning gift. Most things have a climax, and the climax of love is to die for its object. The crucifixion is a masterpiece of love. His dying excels all His other acts. Now you remember that our Lord spoke these words on the night of his betrayal. There lay before Him the going to Gethsemane, the palace of the High Priest and Pilate's court, the scourging, the buffeting, the crown of thorns, the spitting, the purple robe, the reed with which they smote Him on the head, and lastly Calvary's cross. The remarkable thing is that all through the chapters John 13—17, you do not find one reference to His suffering. His concern was about the men he was leaving in a hostile world to be His representatives. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends." The incarnation was a marvel in itself, but His death on the cruel cross in agony superlative was love's most eloquent language.

That cross makes its appeal to us, and especially to the young here today. I wish I had copies of McNair's tract to give you. You would all like to read it, and it would challenge you as you stand on the threshold of life which lies before you.

"I gave My life for thee ;  
What hast thou done for Me?"

I know we cannot all be missionaries. In many ways it is a far harder business to serve the Lord in this country than it is across the seas, and this especially with regard to numbers attending meetings. At several centres in Brazil we have the opportunity of speaking to many hundreds, whilst here it is astonish-

ing how small the meetings are sometimes. But the sphere of our service is not the point to-night, but rather the service itself. We have the opportunity of making known the unsearchable riches of Christ, the first thing required being humility.

Paul speaks about serving the Lord with all humility of mind and the one thing God will not tolerate in anyone is pride. God is gracious and he bears with us a long time, but pride is hateful to God and if the servant of God is proud he is in for a fall sooner or later. What led Paul to suffer as he did, to put up with all kinds of discomforts, tribulations and difficulties? It was this surpassing love of Christ. He had discovered that the despised Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God glorified at the right hand of God and he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision and forth he went at his Lord's command not living unto himself, but to blaze out his life in service for Christ. It was the love of Christ which constrained him.

So we have unsearchable riches as the fruit of surpassing love. Yet we can **enjoy** a great many of these riches though we cannot come to the end of them. How much do we study the word of God, which is an inexhaustible treasure? What is our

experience of the surpassing love of Christ?

Now we come to the gift. The gospel is based on giving, and the subject in 2 Corinthians 9 is that of giving. The Apostle Paul was stirring them up by the example of the saints of Macedonia to give of their substance to the poor saints of Jerusalem. Then he was led by the Spirit of God to get at their pockets through their hearts. So we have in chapter 8 that magnificent verse concerning "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Then coming to the end of chapter 9, he says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Now Paul was no mean linguist and the Greek language is a very rich one, yet when Paul came to write that verse there was no adjective to describe the gift of God, and so he wrote, "Thanks be unto God for his **unspeakable** gift." I am sure we all say the same. It is not sufficient to say it; we are to show our faithfulness and appreciation by our lives. Before I sit down let me quote this verse:

"Run the straight race through  
God's good grace,  
Lift up thine eyes and seek His  
face,  
Life with its path before thee  
lies,  
Christ is the path and Christ the  
prize."

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If He both task and strength bestow  
What would'st thou more? How can'st thou fail?  
In thee His glory, He shall show,  
And by His might thou shalt prevail.

# “WHOM I SERVE.”

S. N. DOWNS.

Condensed Notes of an Address at Bonskeid on Genesis 24: 10—15,  
19—26, 61—67.

SOME of you no doubt have been up the knoll nearby, and entered the little cemetery there. You may have noticed two verses or parts of verses that are inscribed on one stone. Of one it is said, “Servant of the Church”; and of another, “Whose I am and whom I serve.” Phebe in Romans 16 is called a servant of the Church. The other quotation is from Acts 27, when during that terrible storm Paul says to the shipmaster that “the angel of God whose I am, and whom I serve,” appeared to him.

It is a great thing to be the Lord’s, and for Paul it was one and the same thing to be His and to serve Him. All of us should be His servants. We sing,

“He is mine and I am His  
For ever and for ever.”

Well now, I suppose that for all of us here it is true that we are His. Are we serving Him? Let us put the question to ourselves each one individually.

My mind goes back to something which has happened more than once in the Congo. We are out with a truck on one of the Congo roads and we stick and there comes up a little group of natives. They come round out of curiosity to see what is the matter. We decide perhaps that if they would push behind we might be able to get a move on, so we call ten of the strongest and ask them to give us a push. We get inside the truck at the wheel; it starts to move

but it does not move very fast. We wonder why, and if we are quick enough we find that only three are pushing; the rest are hanging on the back for a ride, and that is why the truck will not go. They are just passengers.

Now in the Christian life and service the Lord does not want mere passengers, but servants. In John 15: 15 the Lord says to His disciples, “Henceforth, I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends.” Then in chapter 20: 17 the Lord Jesus calls them His brethren, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” “Brethren” indicates relationship. We are brethren, for we have been brought into that wonderful relationship as the fruit of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Then a friend is one with whom you can have communion. You can tell out your thoughts and you can share his thoughts. The Lord did not say “you are not My servants,” but “I call you not servants,” for we are more than that. Our being “brethren” and “friends” ennobles the thought of service for us. But we are called upon every one of us to serve Him.

The Apostle Paul was a pattern servant, and when he was on the Damascus road, struck down by the light above the brightness of the sun, before he could ask the Lord,

“What wilt Thou have me to do?” he was absolutely broken and utterly humbled in the presence of the Lord. We have to get to that point where we come to an end of ourselves, and our goodness, our confidence and all our pride, if we are really and truly to ask the Lord to show us that service which He would have us do for Him. Notice that the Lord’s will was to govern Him. This is a personal thing which we have to settle between ourselves and the Lord. I often pray that our African helpers might learn this secret and that they may become dependent on the Lord, and that they may seek from Him guidance to know the service he would have them do. So often we find they look to the missionaries, and often they are disappointed in us and downcast, but it is a grand thing when we see some of them having personal dealings with the Lord. So it should be with each of us.

In the story which we read in Genesis we find a servant, and there are some things about him which will help us. He is not named in this chapter. It may have been Eliezer. He is simply Abraham’s servant, not seeking greatness for himself, or putting himself forward, but doing Abraham’s bidding. Verse 8 indicates that he was not finally responsible for the results of his service, had the woman not been willing to follow him. We see how limited his liability was, and he had simply to understand his master’s will and do it, the final responsibility being with his master. So it is in our Christian service. We have God’s word, and we are encouraged to discover for ourselves what God’s will is for us, and where to do it,

seeking the power that we need to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then verse 10 shows that he took time to prepare for his journey. It would never have done for Abraham’s servant to arrive in the presence of Rebecca and her family with the words, “I really meant to bring earrings, bracelets, etc., but I had to come away in such a hurry that I forgot.” Abraham’s servant took time and thought and prepared everything, so that when he got there everything was in readiness. We are reminded of our Lord’s own wonderful service as we get it portrayed for us in the Gospels. He went about doing good, never rushing about from one place to another. He knew just what to do and when to do it. There was a majesty in His actions, in His words and in His movements. Everything was perfect in Him, and surely we can take a lesson from that for ourselves.

Then lastly in connection with Abraham’s servant there is that word in verse 27, “I being in the way the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren..” If like Paul we have been humbled and broken and our old self has been dealt with in the cross of Christ, we are entitled to ask what He would have us to do and when we know His will he will reveal the next step. We are called to service. That service may be at our very door. In the work and witness of the Lord there is so much variety. Here is indeed something for each one of us and that something may be some small service we had never thought of. If that little service be faithfully done we shall be like Abra-

ham's servant putting ourselves out of the picture, and letting Christ perform the work of God through us as channels of His grace.

Now a word on how this would work in a foreign field. The Lord Jesus when He was raised from the dead gave us a charter that we might go out to the nations so that we know that we are in line with His will. Again, He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth," and that gives us our work for this present time. Some have said, "How can you expect people of ability and training to come out and spend their lives in Central Africa or in any other part of the world where life is so primitive and so uncomfortable?" I believe that, if we were each one

just willing to be servants carrying out what the Lord has entrusted to us, there would be no lack of servants for any part of His work, whether at home or abroad, whether Sunday School work, visiting or missionary work in other lands. Let us see to it that we are serving **the Lord**. Let us seek from Him to know the sphere of our service, and surely He will supply the need wherever His work is going on.

Words which are a great incentive to our service are these: "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22: 3, 4). Service will indeed go on beyond this present life. And above all, **His servants shall see His face**.

## "COME OVER . . . AND HELP US."

S. MICHIE.

Condensed Notes of an Address at Bonskeid on Acts 13: 2; 16: 6—10

I HAVE been very impressed by accounts of how on certain occasions a word spoken has come home to the soul in power, and changed the course of a life. Consequently I have been thinking back over the years, and I remember two occasions when the Lord spoke to me in real power.

The first was as I walked along a country road with a young brother. He just said one simple word in the power of the Spirit of God, and I realized for the first time that the world which had crucified and put to death my Saviour must be put to death in my soul. It meant an end of living for the world.

The second occasion was in a meeting something similar to this. Dear Mr. Mawson [formerly Editor of Scripture Truth], was speaking, and he told a story which I have told many times since, and it was largely instrumental in leading me to serve the Lord in the Congo. He told how a young man, when he was in his youth, dedicated his life to the Lord's service. In course of time he went to college and while there he discovered he had a gift as an artist, and he gave himself over wholeheartedly to this work of an artist and forgot the work of the Lord. He certainly painted wonderful pictures. But towards the close of his life he saw in a dream how all

his friends had gathered together and decided to take a hall to have an exhibition of his works of art. He saw himself walking down this hall admiring the wonderful pictures he had painted, when suddenly he noticed the hall was on fire. Just in time he saw an exit and was able to escape with his life before the whole building was a burning mass. The work of a lifetime was burnt up in a moment of time; and now with life almost over he remembered that early dedication of his life to the Lord's service, and here was his life over and done with, and he had nothing that was going to last. He had spent his life doing something that was only for time. I was only a young man when I heard that incident, but the Lord spoke to me and I decided, if the Lord should tarry, I would serve Him and Him alone.

There is a verse in the epistle of James, "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Have you ever pondered this to realize what it means? Both Abraham and Lot set out together with the same opportunities, but Lot wasted his opportunities and chances. They came to the place where a choice must be made. Lot's thoughts were on temporal things and he chose things which could be seen. Abraham had the faith that could let God choose for him, so he gave Lot first choice. Each one of us has to look beyond the things of time and reach that place of self-denial. God desires all of us to come to an end of self so that He can use us in His service.

We can see from these verses we have read how the Apostle Paul in

the assembly of Antioch is ready for the Holy Spirit to work in him and with him. There is nothing of self governing him, and the Lord separates him for this work. He is ready to go. And then we come to chapter 16, and find that he sees the vision of the man of Macedonia in all his need and he hears the call, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." How thankful we ought to be that the Apostle Paul saw that vision, because as a result of it the gospel came to Europe and to us. The Africans say "If you have known the gospel story all these years how is it you have never come before to reach the black people?" I reply, "Perhaps the Ethiopian eunuch was not prepared to leave his home country and spread the gospel, and it never reached you."

What happened to his testimony we do not know, but nevertheless there is a responsibility resting upon us. I would like you young people to see a vision of the need of this world and reach that place where you are prepared to say, "Here am I, send me." It does not mean that the Lord is going to send you as a missionary to a foreign land. It might be to your next door neighbour. The point that you have got to reach is that you are willing to say, "Here am I send me."

Many years ago I heard a prominent evangelist tell his experiences when he was a young Christian, how he refused for weeks and months to yield to the Lord, because he felt that the Lord was going to send him as a missionary to China, and of all the things he dreaded it was to be sent as a missionary to China. He rebelled against yielding his will to the Lord. One night about four in

the morning he was down on his knees wrestling in prayer and his will was broken and he said, "Here am I send me." The Lord did not send him to China. He used him as an evangelist, and as a result of his ministry hundreds of souls were converted and of those converted over a hundred have gone out to China as missionaries. The point is, are you going to say, "Here am I send me."

I cannot bring before you the great need of Africa. May you have some vision of the need of the world and may you like the Apostle Paul be willing and ready to respond. He went, and because he went God was glorified in the salvation of souls.

When they got there they found a prayer meeting and they preached the Word, and there was a woman there whose heart the Lord opened. She was brought into all the blessing of salvation, and in these dark heathen lands there are those who are waiting to hear the words of life. So may you be prepared to say, "Lord, here am I, send me." A verse of a hymn we sometimes sing says:

"In the field of Jesus there is  
work for you,  
Work which even angels might  
rejoice to do,  
Why stand idly sighing for  
some life work grand,  
When the field of Jesus seeks  
your reaping hand."

### THE GRACE OF GOD

Grace has this character ; it is not simply love (it is perfect love, but it is not simply love) ; it is love acting where evil already is, and towards that which is evil. There is perfect love between the Father and the Son, but that is not grace. God loves the angels, but you cannot call that grace. Grace is the exercise of this same perfect holy love towards that which is totally unworthy of it.

If we look at the simple fact of what grace is, it has no limits, no bounds. Be we what we may (and we cannot be worse than we are), in spite of all that, what God is towards us is **love**! Neither our joy, nor our peace, is dependent on what we are to God, but on what He is to us, and this is grace.

Grace supposes all the sin and evil that is in us, and is the blessed revelation that through Jesus all this sin and evil has been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins—nay, than all the sins in the world—are to us ; and yet, with the fullest consciousness of what we are, all that God is pleased to be towards us is love.

"I would give the world to have your experience," said a wealthy man to a devoted Christian lady.

"That's just what it cost me," she replied ; "I gave the world for it."

A grand exchange! Who that knows Christ would not willingly prefer Him above every selfish joy? It is this choice which makes and marks an overcomer.

# BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION.

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 21: 9 — 22: 5).

**J**OHN is now granted a fresh vision, the description of which begins in verse 9. Two remarks of a general nature may be made as to it. First, it stands in very definite contrast with the vision he was given of Babylon, the great whore, in chapters 17 and 18. In both cases the vision is introduced by one of the angels who had the seven vials, but to see Babylon John was carried in spirit into the wilderness, while to see the holy Jerusalem he is carried into a great and high mountain. A wilderness is a region where is specially seen the curse that rests upon creation because of man's sin, according to Genesis 3: 18. In ascending a high mountain a man travels as far as his feet can carry him towards heaven, and away from the mists and defilements of earth.

Second, in this vision John sees the holy city, the bride, the Lamb's wife, not as it will be in the eternal state, as in verses 2 and 3 of our chapter, but as it will be in connection with the millennial scene. The fact that we read of the twelve tribes of Israel, the nations who are to be healed and saved, and the kings of the earth, make this manifest. So when John sees the city descending out of heaven from God, in verse 10, he is viewing it coming down to take up its connection with the millennial earth at the beginning of that epoch. When he saw it coming down, in verse 2, it was at the beginning of the eternal state, the millennium being over. The recognition of this fact enhances the

value of the words in verse 2, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." A thousand years have rolled, yet her bridal beauty for the heart of Christ is untarnished and as fresh as ever.

As with Babylon so here we have brought together the two symbols of a woman and a city. They appear, on the surface, to be quite incongruous, but not so when we come to their significance. The one sets forth what the church will be to Christ; the other what it will be for Him: as the bride, the object of His love; as the city, the centre from which His powerful administration will proceed.

The adjective, "great," in verse 10 lacks authority and should be omitted. The harlot city, Babylon, was characterized by greatness, the bridal city, New Jerusalem, is characterized by being from God, and hence it is holy and heavenly and has the glory of God — not the glory of man. This being so, it descends over the earth as a luminary, and "her light" is likened to "a jasper stone clear as crystal." Jasper indeed is mentioned three times in the description of the city, and the only other occurrence of the word in the book is in the description of the One who sits on the throne in chapter 4: 3. That which is descriptive of God is descriptive of the city.

Verses 12 to 21 are occupied with the wall, the gates, the foundations, and the city itself. We may consider them in that order. The wall is described as great and high. No

adverse power could force an entrance. Evil is totally excluded. Its measure was 144 cubits, the square of 12, which is the number of administration. Here at last then is administration in such perfection as to shut out all that is wrong.

The wall however was not absolutely continuous: there were twelve gates, three on each of its four sides. Now gates are made in order that there may be going out and coming in, so that the city, though amply protected by its wall, is not a self-contained and isolated unit. There is to be happy intercourse between it and the millennial earth. He who approaches it finds an angel at each gate, so that all come under inspection. Moreover each gate is a pearl; a reminder this, we should say, to all who approach, that the city itself as "the bride" represents that "pearl of great price" for which the Saviour "sold all that He had." Those who go out find on the gates the names of the tribes of Israel, as indicating the route by which one travels to the happy earth beneath. All the administration of that day will proceed from the throne in the heavenly metropolis, and reach the earth by way of Israel.

Here too is a city which has foundations, and God is the Builder and Maker of it. Twelve again appears, as the number of the foundations, and on each the name of one of the apostles of the Lamb. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, according to Ephesians 2: 20, so this confirms us in thinking that in symbolic way the city sets forth the church. Again the foundations are garnished with precious stones; a stone to each

foundation. The first has jasper, which, as we have just seen, is peculiarly descriptive of God Himself. That which speaks of God lies at the very foundation of everything here, but each stone in one way or another acts as a prism, reflecting the various hues that go to make up light. The very foundations of the city sparkle with the light of God, but so reflected that men may appreciate its colourful details.

The city itself as well as its gates and wall is measured by the angel, using a golden reed. Thus the measuring standard was divine, and it was found to be a perfect cube of immense dimensions. A furlong (or stadium, as the word is) was about 200 yards, so 12,000 would equal about 1,375 miles. The fact that its height was this as well as its length and breadth, helps to confirm the thought that we are dealing not with literal language but symbolic. In this measurement we again meet with twelve, the number of administration, and the very street of the city is gold like transparent glass. In earth's cities the street is the place where dirt accumulates. There all is divine purity and transparency, and as is the city so is the government that proceeds from it.

Verses 22 and 23 unfold to us that wherein the glory of the city consists. The earthly Jerusalem of the millennial age will have the Temple of Jehovah as its crowning glory. Ezekiel sees this in vision, and records it and the measurements of it in his chapters 40 to 48. The glory of the heavenly Jerusalem is that it has no temple for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it; that is, there They shine in Their glory without the necessity of

a covering or screen. In "Lord God Almighty" we have reference to the three names under which God was revealed in Old Testament times, and with Him is coupled on equal terms the once humbled Lamb, depreciated and set at nought by men. There is no mention of God as Father here, but that is, we judge, because the emphasis is not on the **relationship**, in which the church is set, but on the **administration**, which is committed to it.

Amongst men administration is so often a failure by reason of unrighteousness or ignorance. Here all is marked by the perfect light of God. The glory of God illuminates the city, and the "light," or more accurately "lamp" of it is the Lamb. In Him the light will be concentrated and made available for the city. All natural light is superseded and no longer needed there. Verse 24 shows that though the light has its seat in the city it is diffused upon earth so that the saved nations enjoy it. All their activities will be governed by it, and thus we see how at last heaven and earth shall be brought into sweet accord, as was hinted in Hosea 2: 21, 22.

But just as the light of God streams out of the heavenly city so into it shall flow the glory and honour of the kings of the earth and of the nations. In chapter 17: 2, we saw the kings of the earth trafficking with the false Babylon before the advent of Christ. They have now departed to their doom, as also the nations who forgot God. The kings and nations of our chapter are those who have passed into millennial blessedness in happy subjection to the Lord. Heavenly light shines forth upon them and glory and hon-

our streams back into the city from them on earth. Here is a scene portrayed which may well enrapture every heart; only to be exceeded by the joys of the city itself.

This delightful intercourse is uninterrupted as far as the city is concerned. Its gates are never shut, for within it is continuous day. If we compare this with Isaiah 60: 11, we find an instructive contrast. In that glad day the gates of the earthly Jerusalem will be open continually. There will be night there for it says, "they shall not be shut day nor night." Into that city, the "forces" or "wealth" of the Gentiles, and their kings, will be brought. Thus on earth things will be on a lower footing, though there is some similarity with the heavenly city, which will be more clearly seen if all the latter part of that chapter be read.

From the heavenly city every form of evil and defilement and untruth will be wholly excluded, and only those written in the Lamb's book of life will enter it. This could hardly be said of the earthly Jerusalem, even in the millennial age.

We have already seen that there is no temple in the heavenly city inasmuch as God and the Lamb are the Temple of it. The opening verse of chapter 22 shows that the throne of God and the Lamb is there, and this is again stated even more definitely in verse 3. Out of the throne proceeds the water of life like a flowing river. No earthly throne — not even the best of them — has proved itself to be a fountain of life. Their rule has been too oppressive or too weak, or their decisions before reaching the people have been too polluted in passing

through lesser human channels. Here at last is a throne of absolute righteousness, which is exerted in beneficence, and life is the outcome. Moreover the city from which it flows out to men, is protected from every kind of defilement, and therefore no pollution reaches it as it flows. It is "pure" and "clear as crystal." We read of Zion on earth as the spot where, "the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psa. 133: 3). We are now contemplating the heavenly source whence all flows.

The river of life nourishes and supports the tree of life, and that tree is in the midst of the golden street of the city. Our thoughts are carried back at once to Genesis 2 and 3. In his condition of innocence Adam had two trees within his reach. The tree of life was not forbidden him: the tree of knowledge of good and evil was. The one open to him he passed by: the one forbidden he took. As a fallen man the tree of life was placed beyond his reach by angelic action, never to be reached by anything that any man can do. There was no solution of the fearful problem raised until the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Then, and only then, the responsibilities incurred by the knowledge of good and evil were met, and the risen Christ becomes the true Tree of Life for men. It is as true to-day as it will be then, that "the tree of life . . . is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2: 7).

On this glorious tree the number twelve again is stamped. Its fruit is in twelve-fold diversity, and yielded twelve times a year. The

fruits are apparently for the heavenly city, but its very leaves are to bring healing to the nations. The mention of months, of nations and of healing, show that the whole scene is concerned with the millennium and not with the eternal state.

When considering the eternal state, at the beginning of chapter 21, we saw that much of the detail given is of a negative order — the mention of what will **not** be there. We find the same feature here. The city has no temple, no need of sun and moon, and no possibility of pollution. Now we find that there is no more curse, and it is repeated that there is no night there. Directly sin entered a curse entered, as Genesis 3 bears witness. The entrance of the law only made the curse more emphatic, and Malachi, the last prophetic word to the people under the law, uses the word freely: it is indeed the last word of the Old Testament.

The disobedience of the first man brought in the curse. The obedience of the Second, even unto death, laid the basis for its removal. When the throne of God and of the Lamb is established in the city then the curse goes out for ever. All disobedience will have disappeared. The Divine authority will be fully acknowledged, and righteousness, having nothing to challenge it, will be exercised purely in blessing.

Therefore it is that we read, "His servants shall serve Him." But, if they were His servants, did they not always serve Him? — we may ask. The answer would have to be — only in part. So often, alas! selfish motives were mixed in with their service to Him, and the more spirit-

ually minded they were the more they were conscious of it. Now at last the flesh in them has been eliminated and they really do serve Him. All that is entrusted to them, in carrying out the will of God and the Lamb, will be perfectly accomplished.

Then comes that glorious statement, "they shall see His face." His face is connected with His glory in the revelation of Himself. When the law was given, and broken, Moses found **grace** in God's sight, and thus emboldened he said, "I beseech Thee, shew me Thy **glory**." The answer was, "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live." Under grace the contrast is great. We can say, "God . . . hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But what we have here far exceeds that. Brought into favour, we shall dwell in the full light of the knowledge of God, perfectly revealed in Christ. The prayer of our Lord will be fulfilled, "that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." We shall see the face of God for ever, **in beholding Him**.

Out of this, surely, springs the next statement, "His name shall be in their foreheads." In chapter 13, we learned that the followers of the beast had to have the mark or the name in their foreheads, thus declaring their allegiance to him, and that they represented him. Such come, as we have seen, under the wrath of God. We shall bear the name of God and the Lamb in the most prominent place, declaring our everlasting allegiance to Him, and reflecting

His likeness as His representatives.

It would be difficult to conceive of anything more blessed than this — dwelling in His light, and reflecting His likeness for ever. Note the striking fact of "His" thrice repeated — not "Their." God and the Lamb are both brought together under a pronoun in the singular. They are clearly distinguished; but They are **one**. Another indication this of the Deity of Christ.

Brought thus into this blaze of living light, all the darkness of night is for ever gone, and no feeble candle of man's making is needed. Our chapter began with life and has proceeded to light. Love is not mentioned, it is only inferred, inasmuch as the city is the bride, the Lamb's wife. That doubtless is because it is the city which is dwelt upon, and that sets forth not love but a centre of Divine administration.

So the closing words of the description are, "they shall reign for ever and ever." As we learned at the opening of the book, the saints are made a kingdom of priests to God; that is, they are priestly kings. Further, as Paul told the Corinthians, "the saints shall judge the world." And again, "we shall judge angels." This is the thought of God, long purposed. Now we find it brought to accomplishment.

Here, then, are things that rise far above our feeble powers of apprehension at present. Nevertheless they are, blessed be God, profoundly real and, accomplished in their season, to be established for ever.

# LOVE'S DESIRE.

J. F. ENGLISH.

**I**N Old Testament days, consequent upon the people of Israel stating they would do all that Jehovah commanded, He expressed His requirements in the Ten Commandments, which are briefly summed up as love to God and love to one's neighbour. This, however, is what no single person has ever done or could do, except the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom and by whom there was a complete response to these requirements.

In the New Testament, there is no command to love God, but His wondrous love to us is manifested and brought before us in the Gospel concerning His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have many precious blessings referred to, as being for those who **love** God. Of all these blessings none is greater for us while on earth than those referred to by our Lord in these words,

“He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.

“If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14: 21 and 23).

The love and companionship of the Father and the Son are far more than anything else and they are promised, not specially to those who do great exploits, or have a prominent place in the service of the Lord, but to those who **love** the

Lord Jesus Christ. Thus these precious blessings and privileges are open to and within the reach of all His own.

Love finds its expression in service to, or for, the loved one; so beautifully told out in the life and death of our Lord Jesus, both for His Father and for us. This love, in His own, finds its outlet in keeping His commandments and His word. Every expression of His mind is precious and eagerly obeyed by those who love Him.

We have a wonderful illustration of this in the incident in the life of King David when he was in the hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was in Bethlehem. Three of his mighty men heard him sigh and express his longing for a drink of water from the well that was by the gate at Bethlehem. These men, to gratify the desire of David, took their lives in their hands and broke through the host of the Philistines, drew water from the well, took it and brought it to David. It was their love for David which prompted them to serve him in this exceptional way, and not any legal command of his. David valued it so highly that he would not drink the water but poured it out as a drink offering unto the Lord, saying, “Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this; is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?” (2 Samuel 23: 17).

Surely in this we get a picture of the service the Lord refers to in these passages in John 14. He calls attention to the one who has His commandments and keeps them, and

indicates that the secret of this is "he it is that loveth Me." It is not a response to legal commandments, but the outgoing of the heart in love to Him.

At the close of the Gospel of John we have recorded for us the interview which our Lord had with the Apostle Peter, in which He stirred up his soul and mind with the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" Three times the Lord appealed to Peter and after each reply he was entrusted with a commission of service for the Lord. From this we judge that the measure of his love for the Lord was his qualification for the service to be undertaken by him. As we learn from 1 Corinthians 13 no service is of any value without love for the Lord.

Needless to say, this love for the Lord is not found in the flesh or in our natural hearts but only in the power of God the Holy Spirit, operating in the hearts of those born again of God.

In John 14, 15 and 16 we have given to us the words of the Lord, detailing the sevenfold office of the Holy Spirit to His own:

- 1.—"He may abide with you for ever."
- 2.—"Teach you all things."
- 3.—"Bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
- 4.—"He shall testify of Me."
- 5.—"He will guide you into all truth."
- 6.—"He will show you things to come."
- 7.—"He shall glorify Me."

In these offices, His work is to attract our hearts to our Lord Jesus Christ, as typified in the instance of the nameless servant of Abraham in winning the heart of Rebecca and attracting her to Isaac.

It is only, therefore, as we are subject to the Spirit's guidance through the Word of God that love for the Lord is operative in our hearts. We shall thus grow in apprehension of His commandments and His Word will become precious to us, and it will be our delight to walk therein. We shall be in the enjoyment of the love of the Father and the Son. From this will flow our service, which will be that definitely assigned to us by Him and at all times acceptable to Him.

Was it departure from the Spirit's guidance that had taken place in the Church at Ephesus and that brought from the Lord that solemn statement: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent and do the first works" (Rev. 2: 4, 5)? There was with them much service, which the Lord commends; for His Name's sake they had borne with patience and laboured without fainting. Nevertheless, there was that which was lacking and the Lord would have them "remember from whence thou art fallen."

What a fall! From the nearness of loving companionship and fellowship with the Father and the Son, into the place of a servant working from a sense of duty instead of the intelligent service of one near enough to enter into the desires of the heart of the Beloved One.

The Lord is appealing again to His own, whose love He misses. Our love for Him is more precious to Him than any service we can render. In order to secure our love He gave HIMSELF to endure all that the death of the Cross meant. He has angels, principalities and powers who obey His commands unswervingly serving Him, but they know not His love as we do. It was not for them He suffered and died, but for us and every little bit of responsive love to Him is most precious to Him. He loves us so much, He desires that we should know HIMSELF and enjoy the wonderful

companionship of the Father and the Son.

What a wonderful desire is this of love ; that here and now we can know and enjoy that which is to be our portion eternally. It should command our fullest and most earnest consideration and prayers, and as our hearts grow in affection for HIM, we shall get back to first love, and be doing the first works.

We add one closing word of the Lord's:

“ As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in MY LOVE ” (John 15: 9).

## NIGHT, TWILIGHT, NOONTIDE.

A. J. POLLOCK.

THE Bible does not tell us much about Nicodemus, but what it does say is very illuminating. It tells us of the first introduction of Nicodemus to our Lord (John 3: 1-21) ; then of his remark concerning our Lord in the Sanhedrim, which drew upon him the suspicion of his fellow-members (John 7: 45-52) ; and, finally, the never-to-be-forgotten scene when he took part with Joseph of Arimathæa in the burial of our Lord (John 19: 38-42). But the little that the Bible does say reveals more to the thoughtful mind than the few words employed would seem to warrant at first sight.

### NIGHT

Why did Nicodemus come to the Lord Jesus **by night**? Was it that a ruler of the Jews might feel it would damage his prestige as a master in Israel, if he were seen ask-

ing questions of One, who did not belong to the circle of the chief priests and elders? It may have been so. At any rate his opening remarks to our Lord are very revealing. They show that he had come to the conclusion that our Lord was a Teacher come from God, and as such would rank high for knowledge and truthfulness, and that the miracles our Lord performed confirmed this impression. Nicodemus was evidently searching for light, and came with his questions to our Lord.

But his opening remarks were cut short, for our Lord answered with a startling and revolutionary statement, “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3: 3). Two ideas would stand out in his mind as the result of these words. One was that the kingdom

of God would be very desirable. The other that to enter into it a new birth was necessary, which to him was a profound mystery. Did it mean that all his advantages and high character as a master in Israel were to go for nothing in this matter? This was the only conclusion he could arrive at from the words of our Lord. They cut the ground completely from under his feet and left him not an inch of natural goodness or worth to stand upon, if he were to enter the kingdom of God. His best of fallen nature would not do for God.

Nicodemus apparently forgot his questions in this problem put forward by our Lord; this great ultimatum, defining in very plain language the terms for entrance into the kingdom of God. At first his response showed that he did not understand what our Lord referred to. Nicodemus was a materialist, and thought of this new birth on the same level as his first birth. How could a man when he is old enter his mother's womb a second time, and be born? was his question.

Our Lord then expatiated on the theme, informing Nicodemus that new birth was not by natural means, but by water and the Spirit; water answering to the action of the word of life, the word of God, quickening a man's inner being by the action of the Spirit of God, thus producing this very desirable and necessary new birth.

The tenor of the Apostle Paul's teaching in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians amply confirms all this, and is really the unfolding in precise doctrinal teaching of the truth of our Lord's own words, that that which is born of the flesh

is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The bad and the good, as men speak, are alike condemned root and branch, and nothing but divine life will do for God. Our Lord too shows how the new birth comes by the sovereign action of the Spirit of God, using the illustration of the wind blowing where it listeth. Hence one cannot tell from whence it comes, nor whither it goes, and so is every one born of the Spirit.

How much Nicodemus learned that day we do not know. Little did he think when he repaired to our Lord in the secret of darkness with his questions that before long he would have the high honour of assisting in the full light of day in His burial. But we do well to ponder this statement of our Lord as to new birth very deeply, and gather what is to be learned by it.

The great evangelist, George Whitefield, being once asked why he preached so often from the text, "Ye must be born again," replied, "Because ye **MUST** be born again." Could a better answer have been given? It is said that he preached on this theme a thousand times on both sides of the Atlantic.

## TWILIGHT

Imagine the scene. The Pharisees and chief priests had sent their officers to apprehend our Lord. The officers returned, but empty-handed. When asked why they had not brought Jesus, their excuse was that never man spake like this Man. His very words so marked Him as God's Messenger, that they became His protection from arrest. Evidently the Sanhedrim was

alarmed. They asked questions. Are ye deceived? Have any of the rulers believed on Him? Not knowing the law the people are cursed.

In face of this antagonistic atmosphere Nicodemus had the boldness to testify that the law does not condemn a man till it hear him ; surely a matter of ordinary common justice. But this brought upon Nicodemus the rebuke, " Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look ; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

Here Nicodemus' advice brings him under suspicion. He is more in the open than when he first went to Jesus by night. Surely here we see an advance, but he is still in the Sanhedrim, sitting amongst the men, who would have apprehended our Lord.

### NOONTIDE

Much had happened since Nicodemus suggested that our Lord should be heard before being condemned. Our Lord had been crucified. The air had been rent with the cries, " Away with Him, away with Him," coming not only from the throats of the fanatical rabble, but from the lips of polished high priests and scribes. Popular opinion had been strongly against our Lord. In the face of it Peter had denied his Lord, and all the disciples had fled.

In the face of all this opposition we find a wonderful contrast. Isaiah had prophesied long centuries before that our Lord's body would not be buried along with the thieves, who were crucified with Him, thrown into a common dishonoured grave, but that He would lie with the rich in His death (Isaiah 53 : 9). How was this to be fulfilled?

Two men are raised up of God to fulfil this prophecy. Two secret believers come to the front. Joseph of Arimathæa, a rich man, a possessor of a new tomb in which no dead body had lain, came forward, and with him Nicodemus, also a secret believer, to give reverential burial to our Lord's body.

The very fierceness of opposition to our Lord moved these secret believers to their very depths, and in the face of a hostile world in full daylight they openly avowed their attachment to Him.

They stood up at a moment when His enemies were still hot in their fanatical opposition. Well might the Lord say of His enemies, " This is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luke 22 : 53). Thus in the presence of that fanatical hate, these two disciples in the full light of day, with no secrecy about it, paid their homage to our Lord in the reverent burial of His holy body with the marks upon it of His passion so recently made in hands and feet and side. It was a noble sight, the record of it soothing and comforting to all, who love the Lord. Millions of Christians have blessed their names from that day to this. Is it not a testimony to secret believers, timid disciples, who keep in the shadows, that they should come out boldly into full daylight, and confess their Saviour and Lord?

Is this not a charming biography of a disciple given in fewest words possible? The beginning, NIGHT; further on, TWILIGHT; lastly open confession of an heroic nature, NOONTIDE. No book but the Bible can convey in a few vivid strokes so stimulating a story.

# A MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT. J. ANDERSON.

(Acts II: 22-26).

**D**O we encourage one another as we should? This is a question of importance. It is a great privilege to cheer and help a fellow believer in the pathway of faith. Indeed, it is a responsibility to do so.

Barnabas is presented to us as an exhorter of the saints; the word exhort, meaning, of course, to encourage, to spur on, to stimulate. It was because of the goodness of his character, coupled with his great power of exhortation, that he was surnamed Barnabas, which is a Syriac term meaning, Son of Consolation.

To minister some comfort and refreshment to the saints is within the capacity of all, young or old. But do we encourage as we should? Not only in meetings as we gather together, but as we meet a fellow Christian, do we leave each other refreshed, encouraged and cheered? As we visit one another in our homes, do we remember the privilege of prayer together and a little word of encouragement so as to help each other in the Christian life? Or do we often depress and hinder? Are we careful regarding our criticisms of those dear to the Lord Jesus, and is our criticism always from love's standpoint? Let us seek to encourage each other more and more.

We do not forget that, as God has appointed a varied diet for our physical needs, for strength, growth and warmth, so also for our spiritual well-being we need a variety of food, without which some very

needed want would not be supplied. Overmuch exhortation would cause a lack of balance in emotion and would hinder growth. So in Ephesians 4, we have varied gifts given to meet the need of the saints of God; "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Hence we often find doctrine linked with exhortation as in 1 Timothy 4: 13; 2 Timothy 4: 2. We ever need to know what the Holy Spirit teacheth, and a full-orbed view of all the doctrine of God is very necessary so that we may avoid that which is wrong and have that which is good and positive before us to encourage our growth. This, surely, is the object of most of the epistles.

It is remarkable to notice that this seems to have been realized by Barnabas, for, after exhorting the saints to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart (this being the touchstone of all spiritual progress), he went to find Paul and brought him to the saints at Antioch so that they might be taught.

We cannot all teach, but it is within the range of all to encourage, so let us then prove our love to the Lord Jesus and each other by endeavouring to encourage, build up, and spur one another on. May this be our joy in love's care for one another in the body of Christ for, "by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13: 35).

# ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

J. HOUSTON.

**A**BRAMHAM'S faith can be viewed in three different ways: (1), when he left his country, kindred and father's house, and went to Canaan, taking his place there as a stranger and pilgrim; (2), when he received the promise of a son and heir, and the exercise that he had in the long waiting time for its fulfilment; and (3), when he took his journey, with Isaac, the son and heir, to Mount Moriah, to offer him there as a sacrifice. We find reference to the first and last instances in Hebrews 11, and to the second in Romans 4.

1.—It would appear, from Acts 7, that Abraham did not obey the call of God in its completeness, till his father died. In all probability, a severe trial of his faith had taken place, as the bonds of nature clasped him closely to his father. The call of God came to him, when he dwelt in Mesopotamia, but he did not fully answer to it, till death severed those bonds.

How much he learned of the deep meaning of death, from the spiritual point of view, it is difficult to say; but we may be assured, since he was the object of the special thoughts and discipline of God, he would know that death is the separating line between the believer and all that is of nature. And all who live and walk by faith have this great lesson to learn. We cannot really live in a new life, till we have died to the old life. And in the old life, there are bonds which God Himself has formed. This makes it all the more difficult to understand, and still

more difficult, when we have to break them, and act as if they did not exist.

When Abraham obeyed, and came into the land of Canaan, he did not possess it; he only held it in promise. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise." And since it was in promise, and not actual possession, he assumed the attitude of strangership and pilgrimage. He had no citizenship in Ur of the Chaldees, and he had no possession in Canaan. He had what was far better. "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

Our position is the same. We have come out of the world, because we are not of the world. We are not yet in heaven, for we are still on earth. But our citizenship is in heaven, and we are strangers and pilgrims on earth. In truth, we "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham." (Rom. 4: 12).

2.—But Abraham not only received the promise of the land of Canaan; he also received the promise of a son and heir. It was in connection with this son and heir, that the seed was promised (Gen. 15: 4-6). This promise Abraham believed, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

His great faith rose above nature, for he did not expect the fulfilment of God's promise, in giving him a son, in the ordinary way. He believed God, and took no account of anything else, either in himself, or in Sarah, his wife. Through years of

deep and searching trial, he still believed God, and always had before him that what God had promised, He was well able to fulfil. All rested on God: it was God who made the promise, and He had the power to carry into effect all that He had said. This implicit trust in God carries the believer from the impossible in himself, to the possible in God. "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19: 26).

The lessons Abraham learned in this trial of faith are not recorded, but we may be sure, he did not wait all those years on God, for the fulfilment of His promise, without many soul-searching experiences. Often the promptings of the flesh would test him, for flesh never waits on God, nor is, in any sense, subject to God's will. Flesh must act; it cannot wait dependently on God. Sarah too would be searched. In her case, we have the instance of Hagar. She gives an example of flesh acting, in an attempt to get God's promise fulfilled, and she succeeded in moving Abraham to act in the flesh, instead of quietly waiting God's time. God has His due time; He never acts before it, and never after it. Faith knows this, and waits on Him.

What we have to learn in this is, that God abides His own time, before He fulfils His promises, and it behoves us to wait on Him to act, and never, under any circumstance, to act for ourselves. When we have had a waiting time, how profitable it has been to our soul! Yet, we need to be in daily exercise, as to faith, and ever watchful, as to any movement of the flesh, in order to

unsparingly judge it. "My soul, wait thou only upon God." These words express the exercise of the believer at all times. And, in waiting, we serve God, for we wait upon Him. They also serve who stand and wait.

3.—We come to the greatest test of Abraham's faith. The son and heir, whom he loved, was to be offered up in sacrifice. Never had there been such a trial of faith. But, even in this, Abraham obeyed God. He took Isaac, and went to Mount Moriah, leaving the servants at the foot of the mount. He said to the servants: "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, **and come again to you.**"

We might wonder what he meant by these words, that he would return to the servants again, **with the lad**, when, in reality, he was to offer him up in sacrifice. Did he believe God would raise him from the dead, after he had been given up in death? We are told he received him back from the dead **in a figure**. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb. 11: 17-19). This example of faith has no precedent, or parallel, in Scripture; it is unique, in the most exclusive sense of the word.

Full well we know, it has its anti-type in God, the Father, and God, the Son, in His death on Calvary. It pleased God to give us a real human example of what was done

at the cross, where Christ, the Son, was really given up by God, the Father. What infinite depths of love! How all transcends our highest thoughts! Nay, how all our thoughts are utterly confounded! Like the servants, Abraham left at the bottom of the mount, we stand afar off and worship. We cannot draw nigh. It is not for mortals to be where divine Persons alone can be. Yet, how real the cross is to us, when we see

it in the type, Abraham offering up his only begotten son, Isaac.

Resurrection was little known in Abraham's day. It may have been altogether unknown. However, Abraham knew it, when he received Isaac back from the dead in a figure. Obedience leads to wonderful knowledge; in fact, it is the meek, and obedient, God instructs. And there is no telling how much they may learn of God in the path of His will.

## FOUR CONTRASTS.

G. HEPBURN.

SCRIPTURE speaks of the first man and the second man, of the old man and the new man, of the natural man and the spiritual man, and of the outward man and the inward man; and it is very important to have these things in our minds in the way in which they are presented in Scripture, and not to mix and confuse them.

Adam is clearly stated to be the first man, and he was made, or became, a living soul. Further, he was of the earth, earthy. In contrast to this, the second Man is the Lord out of Heaven, heavenly, and as last Adam He is a quickening (life-giving) Spirit. God breathed into the first man, and he became a living soul — received life. In John 20: 22 the Lord in resurrection takes the place of second Man and last Adam, and breathes into his disciples saying: "Receive Holy Spirit." He gives life, His own resurrection life, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The contrast in 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49 is clearly not between Christ and Adam fallen, but between Christ and Adam as he

came from the hand of God, un-fallen; and while the Lord is as truly a man as Adam, yet He is a Man of an altogether different order from Adam, even in innocence. Then there are two generations, as the earthy one, such are the earthy ones and as the Heavenly one, such the heavenly ones. And as to the saints it is added, "As we have borne the image of the earthy," — Adam, "so shall we bear the image of the heavenly," — Christ.

The old man and the new man represent abstract moral ideas, and cannot be applied to any persons in particular, certainly not to Adam and Christ, as in the case of the "first man" and the "second Man." The old man is man as corrupted by Satan and by his own lusts, and nothing but crucifixion could adequately express God's judgment of the old man, we see in Ephesians 4: 22, Romans 6: 6. The new man is man in Christ, a new kind of man altogether, and is new creation. So we read, "To make [create] in Himself of twain one new man," (Eph. 2: 15), and

again, "The new man . . . is created in righteousness and true holiness," (Eph. 4: 24). Since the new man is created, it would be serious error to speak of Christ personally as being that new man; yet every trait of that new man has been perfectly exemplified in Him in His life on earth. The believer is looked upon as having put off the old man, and having put on the new. Hence the exhortations to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications and lying, traits of the old man, and to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, etc., and above all to put on love, the bond of perfection, the traits of the new man. (See Col. 3: 8-14).

As to the natural man and the spiritual man, referred to in 1 Cor. 2: 14-15, here again the ideas are quite different. The natural man is simply man in his unregenerate state, and while the old man is corrupt, and has been judged by God at the Cross, there are still traces of the handiwork of God about the natural man. To mention only one thing, no one will deny that while natural affection is not so common as it was, yet it is still to be found among unconverted people, and certainly is of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned, no matter how educated he may be, or how much of this world's wisdom he may have. In fact, since the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world are diametrically opposed, and each is foolishness in the eyes of the other, it follows that the more of this world's wisdom a man has the more

foolish will the things of God appear in his eyes, whereas the spiritual man, a man by whom the flesh has been judged, and in whom the Holy Spirit is ungrieved, and who is under the influence and control of the Spirit, judges, or discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man.

Needless to say, not every man who has the Holy Spirit is a spiritual man. The Corinthians had the Spirit, yet the apostle says to them: "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal," — fleshly. The flesh had not been judged by them, the Spirit was grieved in them, and while they had much of worldly wisdom, and came behind in no gift, still they were far from being spiritual. Surely it ought to be our chief concern to be found in such a condition that the Holy Spirit may be free to take of the things of Christ and show them to us, and that we may be in the good of the things freely given to us of God, as John 16: 13-15 and 1 Corinthians 2: 11-12 show us. So shall we become spiritual men and women.

Lastly, we read of the outward man and the inward man in 2 Corinthians 4: 16. And still the ideas are different from any of the foregoing. The outward man is what men see, and is variously called, the body, "earthen vessel," "our earthly house of this tabernacle," whereas the inward man is the unseen occupant of the same. Wherever there is a work of grace the inward man delights to do God's will, as stated in Romans 7: 22. Then Paul prays that saints may be "strengthened with might by His

Spirit in the inner man," for a definite purpose. But how blessed to have reached the stage when notwithstanding afflictions (the apostle's afflictions were caused by persecution), and it may be old age, failing strength, and, if the Lord tarry, approaching dissolution, we can say that, "we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet

the inward man is renewed day by day," the result of occupation with the unseen and eternal, spiritual realities. And further, we have perfect assurance that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

## BIBLE STUDY—THE REVELATION. F. B. HOLE

(Chapter 22: 6—21)

**I**N verse 5 we have read the last utterance of prophetic revelation, and in it we were conducted to a condition of blessedness far beyond our highest thoughts. In Genesis 3 we have seen man departing from the light of God — such as was vouchsafed to him — plunging into spiritual night and becoming a slave of sin. Here we see redeemed men, who have received "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness," established in everlasting light, and they "reign in life by One, Jesus Christ," as the Apostle Paul had written in Romans 5: 17.

We are not surprised therefore that verse 6 gives us a solemn affirmation of the truth of the wonderful prospect unfolded. The Apostles made known the power and coming of the Lord, and Peter assures us that they had not followed cunningly devised fables in so doing (see, 2 Peter 1: 16). Here we are contemplating glories which stretch out into eternity and which would be beyond belief were they not guaranteed to us as "faithful and true."

Moreover they are "things which must shortly be done." This statement surely is intended to intimate to us that we must reckon time according to the Divine estimation and not according to ours. The word translated "shortly" is almost the same as that translated "quickly" in the next verse, where we have the first of the three declarations, "I come quickly," that occur in these closing verses. Our centuries are but so many minutes in God's great clock! We incline to think however that this word is also intended to signify that when the Divine action takes place it is marked by swiftness, as it says in Romans 9: 28, "A short work will the Lord make upon the earth." When Jesus comes it will be no slow and long drawn out manifestation but rather like the lightning's flash.

While we wait for His coming our blessedness lies in keeping the sayings of the prophecy we have been considering. We shall "keep" them if we bear them in mind so effectually that they govern our lives. We have heard the study of

prophecy decried on the ground that it is but an intellectual exercise. It may be merely that of course, but it is not intended to be. If we keep the sayings of the prophecy we shall be enriched by the understanding of God's purpose, of the objectives He has before Him, and of the way in which He will reach them. We shall also be blessed by the assurance of the complete victory that will crown all His judgments and His ways.

The effect of all this upon John was very great, as indeed it should be upon us who read it. The impulse to worship was doubtless right, though falling at the feet of the angelic messenger was wrong. This was instantly repudiated by the angel for he took the place merely of a servant, and in that respect on a par with John or the prophets, or indeed with all who take the place of obedience to the word of God. God alone is to be worshipped. No holy angel will accept it, though it is the dearest desire of Satan, the great fallen angel, as is shown in Matthew 4: 9.

Verses 8 and 9 are parenthetical in their nature. We must link verses 10 and 11 with verse 7. These sayings of the prophecy which are so profitable to the one who keeps them, are not to be sealed but kept open for any to inspect. The contrast to the close of Daniel's prophecy strikes one at once. He was to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." The epoch in which we live — the Christian dispensation, we may call it — is "the time of the end," or as John calls it in his epistle "the last time" (2: 18). The Holy Ghost is come and that which formerly

was sealed is open, and that now revealed is not to be sealed. No doubt it is also true that we are now in the last days of the last time, so that all this unsealed prophecy should have a special interest for us.

Verse 11 also is connected with the "Behold I come quickly" of verse 7, as also with the same announcement at the beginning of verse 12. The coming of the Lord will give fixity to the state of all, whether good or bad. To-day there are the unjust and the filthy; the righteous and the holy. But to-day the unjust may be justified and the filthy may be born again and enter the ranks of the holy. The Lord having come, the state of each is unalterably fixed. May this tremendously solemn thought weigh heavily with us all!

Moreover, as verse 12 shows, the coming of the Lord will mean the judgment seat, where every man will have his work valued and rewarded according to its deserts. This is a very solemn thought for each believer. After the rapture of the saints comes the judgment seat of Christ.

It would seem as if, having uttered what is recorded in verse 11, the angel disappears, and the voice of Christ, the coming One, is heard alone. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. There could hardly be a stronger affirmation of His essential Deity than this. Obviously no created being, however exalted, could speak thus. It guarantees the rectitude of all His judgments, and that every reward He bestows will be in exact keeping

with deserts.

Again we find the two classes in verses 14 and 15 — the holy and the filthy. In verse 14 the better attested reading seems to be, "Blessed are they that wash their robes;" that is, once they were filthy but they have been cleansed. Only thus can anyone have right to the tree of life or be given access to the heavenly city. Those washed are within. Those characterized by the evils of verse 15 are without. The Apostle Paul had issued the warning, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers" (Phil. 3: 2), and here we find such excluded for ever. Moreover he had plainly indicated that to-day in the assembly of God there is a divinely recognized "within," and there is the world "without" (1 Cor. 5: 12, 13), so here we find the same separation maintained and carried into eternity.

Verse 16 has in it an element of contrast if compared with the first verse of the book. The prophetic unveilings, given by God to Jesus Christ, and conveyed to us by His angel through John, are now completed. The angel through whom they were communicated has disappeared. Jesus Himself remains, and in this verse and those succeeding it His voice only is heard. In the first place He endorses all that had been conveyed by the ministry of the angel, who had been sent by Him. We are not to think that the prophetic witness was anything less than Divine, though it has reached us in this way. The testimony was given in the seven churches which are in Asia, as stated in chapter 1: 4, but through them is intended for the enlightenment of the whole church until He comes.

Having thus endorsed the whole book, the Lord Jesus, using only His personal Name, presents Himself to us in a twofold way. First, as the root and the offspring of David, which gives us His title in Manhood to the kingdom and all dominance on the earth. Let Psalm 78: 65-72 be read, and then 2 Samuel 23: 1-5. These passages show that by a special intervention of Divine power David was raised up to kingly estate, and how he was but an imperfect forecast of the infinitely greater One who was to spring from him after the flesh. Hence, in Isaiah 11: 1, Christ is spoken of as a "rod" or "shoot" out of the stem of Jesse, and as a branch who is fruitful out of his roots. Here He is clearly presented to us as the "Offspring" of David.

But in the same chapter in Isaiah, verse 10, He is presented as "a root of Jesse" which shall be "in that day," which answers also to what we have in our chapter. He is both "shoot" and "root" in Isaiah; both "offspring" and "root" in Revelation. In the former words His Manhood is the prominent thought; in the latter words, His Deity. And then — again reverting to 2 Samuel 23 — when at last He rules over men in justice and in the fear of God, He will be "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." In this striking and poetic imagery is set forth the opening of earth's bright millennial day, when He comes.

But as the Revelation closes He presents Himself to us, not only in a way that refers us back to the Old Testament predictions of the rising

of the Sun of righteousness, but in a second way more distinctly connected with New Testament hopes. He had been predicted as coming "a Star out of Jacob" (Num. 24: 17), without any reference to the morning. As the bright Morning Star, Jesus presents Himself as the Forerunner and Pledge of the up-rising day. Now Israel does not know Him thus, for it has rejected Him and treated Him as an impostor. The Church, and the Church alone, knows Him in this character, and is authorized to entertain those heavenly hopes, centred in Him, which are to be realized before the day of glory breaks for Israel and the earth.

So in verse 16 the Lord Jesus addresses us personally as the One in whom all hope is centred both for the heavens and for the earth and He strips Himself, if we may so say, of all His titles and honours that more simply and effectively He may present HIMSELF. It is this that most directly appeals to the hearts of His own. Consequently there is an immediate response.

We may find encouragement in the fact that at the end of this book, and indeed of the New Testament as a whole, the Spirit is discovered as still remaining and the bride as a still existing entity on the earth. The failure which has so grievously marked the professing church, as indicated prophetically in chapters 2 and 3, has not grieved away the One nor destroyed the other. The Spirit indwells the bride, and hence as with one voice the response, "Come," is uttered. Such is the fact; but we may well challenge ourselves whether we are altogether in

harmony with this cry. It is to be feared that all too many Christians are still looking for improvement on the earth, or at all events to an ideal condition of things being produced by the preaching of the Gospel, laying great stress on its social implications, and hence hardly joining in the cry.

This is it, we believe, which accounts for the next sentence, which contemplates some who hear, but who so far have not joined in the cry. Is any reader one of these? If so, you are invited to fall into line with the Spirit and the bride and add your "Come" to theirs. The more we realize our part in the Church and the place which the Church has as the bride of Christ the more ardently we shall desire the coming of the Bridegroom.

The third and fourth sentences comprised in verse 17 give us the happy assurance that until He comes the living water that the Gospel bestows is available for every thirsty soul. If our Lord speaks, as He does here, we who are His humble servants may boldly address men in the same confident terms. It is a joy to know that just as we may turn to Him who is the bright Morning Star and say, "Come," so we may turn to men generally, and to the thirsting and the willing in particular, and bid them come to take of the water of life freely. Until this era of grace is replaced by an era of judgment the Gospel invitation is to go forth. It is for "whosoever will" and we may be sure that to the end there will be found some who by the working of God's Spirit will be willing to take!

There is great solemnity about verses 18 and 19. To tamper with the Word of God is a great sin of which it is assumed no true believer will be guilty. Be it noted that the sin may be committed by adding to the words as well as subtracting from them. In olden days the former sin was that of the Pharisees, the latter that of the Sadducees. The one added their tradition, which had the effect of neutralizing the true word of God. The other adopted rationalist views and refused to believe in resurrection or in angel or spirit, and so took away much from the Divine word. Though the names are obsolete the spirit of both is very much alive to-day and this warning is greatly needed. The threatening at the end of verse 19 is perhaps the graver of the two. The taking away of his part from the tree of life, as the margin reads, seems to be correct.

Be it noted also that it is tampering with the "words" that is forbidden. At the very close we have a final intimation that the words of the Divine Writings are inspired. **Verbal** inspiration is claimed right up to the finish. If we have no **verbal** inspiration we have no inspiration at all. It is easy to see this if we transfer our thoughts to mundane affairs. The laws of our land are certainly not inspired but they are authoritative, and they have been enacted by Parliament in written form, sentence by sentence and word by word. In our Law Courts appeal is frequently made to the very words of our laws, knowing that they are valid and cannot successfully be impeached or altered. If counsel in some legal action waived the **words** of the law

aside and pretended to interpret what he called "the spirit of the law" apart from the words, he would be quickly shown the emptiness of his contention and that the **words** had the authority and governed the case. Let us reverence the **WORDS** of this prophecy and of every other part of the Divine Writings.

In verse 20 we have what we may regard as the closing utterance of our blessed Lord in the Holy Scriptures — His last inspired word to His Church. He had just testified to the integrity and authority of His holy word, but in saying "these things," we believe He referred to all contained in this wonderful book; indeed to all that we have in the Scriptures. And His last word of testimony is, "Surely I come quickly." Thus for the third time in this closing chapter He announces His coming. In view of this how extraordinary it is that the very thought of His coming should have so largely slipped out of the mind of the church for ages, and even have been denied or explained away.

The explanation doubtless lies in the fact that the church slipped into the world and set its mind on the earth, as was indicated in the addresses to Pergamos and Thyatira in chapter 2. Enticed by earthly allurements, the coming of the heavenly Christ lost its attraction. Let us see to it that the same process does not take place in our own hearts and lives. If we know what our portion and prospect really is we shall find His coming to be attractive beyond words, and our response will surely be, as indicated here, "Amen." Even so, come,

Lord Jesus." We cannot desire delay and we add our hearty "So be it" — Come quickly, as Thou hast said, Lord Jesus. God grant that this may be the true response of all our hearts.

We have had in verse 20 the closing affirmation and promise of our Lord, and the closing response from the hearts and lips of His saints. Now finally in verse 21 we have the closing benediction from the Lord through the Apostle John, who was the vessel of these communications. The better attested reading is, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints." His full title is used here, and the closing note that is struck is that of His well known **grace**. This grace is to rest on ALL the saints and not on a few only, who may be speci-

ally faithful. And it will rest upon them ALL the time while we wait for Him.

The last word of the Old Testament is "curse." That is because its main theme is the government of God and His law, ministered through Moses. And we read, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3: 10). The New Testament introduces that "grace and truth" which "came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17). Hence the great contrast furnished by the closing words of the New Testament.

We may well bless God that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ shines like the sun upon every saint, while we all wait for the coming of our Lord.

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To take the Bible without the Spirit, is to raise man to the level of God as as to his capacity, and to make man do without in his heart. It is rationalism.

To take the Spirit without the Bible, is to give a loose rein to all the follies of the human imagination, and to cover these extravagancies with the name of God.

To do without the Spirit and the Bible, is what was reserved for the adversaries of the spiritual energy, which in our days, is manifesting itself in the Church.

J.N.D.

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**" I will come again and receive you unto Myself " (John 14: 3).**

Be still, my soul! the hour is hastening on  
 When we shall be for ever with the Lord ;  
 When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,  
 Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
 Be still, my soul! when change and tears are past,  
 All safe and blessèd we shall meet at last.