

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

INDEX

1962-63-64

INDEX

A

<i>Access to God</i>	F. A. Hughes	136
	(Continued)	148
<i>Ascended Christ, The</i>	Colin Curry	171
<i>Awake or asleep</i>	J. Stoddart	182

B

<i>Be a man of purpose</i>	F. B. Hole	165
<i>Bible Study — Deuteronomy</i>	F. B. Hole	11
	(Continued)	27
<i>Boaz, The Fields of</i>	D. W. Paterson	104
<i>Book of Job, The</i>	Herbert Hirst	117
<i>Burnt offering, The</i>	R. Davies	133

C

<i>Charge, The</i>	E. J. Green	41
<i>Church in action, The</i>	J. S. Blackburn	33
<i>Church in the eternal purpose of God, The</i>	J. N. Shepherd	257
<i>Christian baptism</i>	Colin Curry	241
<i>Christian's use of money, The</i>	C. D. Blakeborough	222
<i>Christ's second coming</i>	Colin Curry	213
<i>Correspondence</i>	48, 96, 128, 143, 159, 263	

D

<i>Daily</i>	R. Thomson	111
<i>Death of Christ, The</i>	Colin Curry	69
<i>Discipleship</i>	T. S. Davison	232
<i>Deuteronomy — Bible Study</i>	F. B. Hole	11
	(Continued)	27
<i>Divine Guidance</i>	W. Anglin	175

E

<i>Editor's notebook, From the</i>	63, 80, 112, 268	
<i>Elijah at his translation</i>	R. Thomson	266
<i>Elijah in the cave</i>	R. Thomson	252
<i>Elijah in the conflict</i>	R. Thomson	158
<i>Ephesians, Studies in</i>	J. S. Blackburn	
	209, 225, 245, 259, 287	
<i>Epistle of Jude, The</i>	J. C. M. Harkness	189

F		
<i>Faith — dependent yet distinct</i>	Colin Curry	284
<i>Faith in the new covenant</i>	C. Y. Richardson	107
<i>Faith — “Some better thing”</i>	F. B. Hole	17
<i>Fields of Boaz, The</i>	D. W. Paterson	104
<i>“Follow Me”</i>	A. H. Storrie	38
<i>From heaven</i>	G. Davison	102
G		
<i>Gift of leadership, The</i>	A. Forster	228
<i>God’s victory over evil</i>	F. W. Boyd	254
<i>Guidance of the Lord, The</i>	W. Anglin	207
I		
<i>“In Vain”</i>	J. Stoddart	168
J		
<i>Job, The Book of</i>	Herbert Hirst	117
<i>John 17, Some notes on</i>	J. Houston	8
<i>John, First epistle, chapter 4, Notes on</i>	R. Davies	62
<i>John the Baptist</i>	F. W. Boyd	170
K		
<i>Kingdom loyalty</i>	F. J. Fennell	91
L		
<i>Leadership, The gift of</i>	A. Forster	228
<i>Longsuffering of God, The</i>	R. Thomson	60
<i>Lord’s guidance, The</i>	W. Anglin	220
<i>Love of Jesus, The</i>	Norman Anderson	126
M		
<i>Motives</i>	T. S. Davison	141
N		
<i>New man in Christ, The</i>	T. S. Davison	155
O		
<i>Obedience</i>	Henry Howitt	191
<i>Opened heavens, The</i>	F. A. Hughes	53
<i>Overcomer, The</i>	T. S. Davison	75

P

<i>Paul's last words</i>	T. S. Davison	202
<i>Perfect peace</i>	C. Y. Richardson	73
<i>Pleasing whom?</i>	J. Stoddart	152
<i>Potter's vessel, The</i>	J. Stoddart	236
<i>Pre-eminence of Christ, The</i>	D. W. Paterson	250
<i>"Profitable . . . for reproof"</i>	A. Forster	87

R

<i>Reconciliation</i>	J. Stoddart	273
<i>Resurrection of Christ, The</i>	Colin Curry	129
<i>Right position and condition, The</i>	J. T. Mawson	22

S

<i>Saviour from heaven, The</i>	J. Turnbull	7
<i>Shakings — "Yet once more"</i>	F. B. Hole	1
<i>Sower and the harvest, The</i>	J. T. Mawson	3
<i>Sympathy of our High Priest, The</i>	J. N. Shepherd	123

T

<i>"Till He come"</i>	R. Thomson	20
<i>Timothean doxologies, The</i>	A. H. Storrie	184
<i>Trouble</i>	J. R. Jameson	109
<i>True worship, The</i>	J. S. Blackburn	49, 65, 81, 97, 113, 138, 145, 166, 177, 199, 212
<i>Two warnings and an example</i>	J.N.D. extracted	43

U

<i>Unchanging Christ, The</i>	B. A. Lilley	276
-------------------------------	--------------	-----

W

<i>Walking with God</i>	T. S. Davison	280
<i>What is the world?</i>	J. Stoddart	217
<i>"Whom the Lord loveth"</i>	F. J. Fennell	121
<i>"Wilt Thou not revive us again?"</i>	C. H. Selley	161
<i>"Wisdom hath builded her house"</i>	R. Davies	39
<i>"With Christ, which is far better"</i>	Ernest H. Lyon	127
<i>Witness of God, The</i>	Herbert Hirst	55
<i>Worship, The True</i>	J. S. Blackburn	49, 65, 81, 97, 113, 138, 145, 166, 177, 199, 212

Y

<i>Your everyday job</i>	P. H. Hirst	193
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SHAKINGS—"YET ONCE MORE"

F. B. HOLE.

"Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven"
(Heb. 12: 26).

IN these words the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gave a free rendering of a prediction first uttered by the prophet Haggai, and he quoted them to lay stress on the word, "once." Let us mark it well! "Once more;" then of course, since no further shaking will take place, it will be the final thing. It will be an act of God, and hence the next verse of the chapter explains that, "this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." We know therefore what the end will be of everything that has been undermined by sin; and we need not be surprised if there are shakings today.

When an earthquake smites some part of the earth's surface it comes as a bolt from the blue. Without the slightest warning the catastrophe falls, and people are hurled off their feet by the fearful convulsion of nature which takes place, and then for weeks and even months after there are subsequent shakings of a minor sort. The earth has had its great displacements, but there are a number of lesser jolts before it settles down into its new position. That is the way in created matter, but God's way in dealing with men seems to be the reverse.

When, for instance, God shook Egypt to its centre by the death of

the firstborn, He heralded the approach of this major disturbance by the nine preceding minor disturbances, which we call, "the plagues." These were providential judgments with a tendency to increase in severity. Then lastly came the great shock, when by the angel of death God Himself came down in judgment.

So it is to be once more on a vaster scale. The book of Revelation is the forecasting of the shakings, which grow in intensity, until they reach the heavens as well as the earth, and eventuate in the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus in judgment. But we may feel inclined to enquire, Why shake the heavens as well as this sinful earth?

The answer to that question is clearly this, that the heavens are the seat of Satan's power. He is called, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2: 2), and under him there are "principalities" and "powers," "the rulers of the darkness of this world" and "spiritual wickedness in high [or, heavenly] places" (Eph. 6: 12). The evil movements that fill the earth are largely directed from Satan's seat of power in the heavens. God is going to deal in judgment not only with the sin and the evils that fill the earth **below**, but also with the Satanic powers **above**, whence all is directed.

So in reading the book of Reve-

lation, we see the Divine hand beginning to shake things on earth, when we reach chapter 6; and when we reach chapter 12, we find the heavens are shaken, and Satan dispossessed and cast down to the earth; and then this final shaking from the hand of God reaches its completion in chapter 19.

At the present moment it is manifest that the affairs of men are in a very insecure position. Was there ever a moment in the history of the world when the spirit of self-assertion, unrest, insurrection was more powerfully displayed in every quarter of the earth? What we may call earth-tremors are becoming more and more distinct. Nations, governments, organizations, the whole world-system, in fact, has become like a building showing ugly rents and fissures, awaiting, as we know, the final shake — “yet **once** more.”

Now, is the Christian to be alarmed and down-hearted? Indeed he is not! He receives “a kingdom which cannot be moved,” as verse 28 of our chapter states. A careful reader of the whole epistle can hardly fail to note the adjectives that frequently occur — “**eternal** salvation” — “two **immutable** things” — “an **unchangeable** priesthood” — “**eternal** redemption” — “an

enduring substance” — “the **everlasting** covenant.” In faith we have already come to a region of blessed realities, as set forth in verses 22 to 24, of this twelfth chapter. In chapter eleven faith is strongly stressed, since only by faith are these abiding realities really embraced by us at the present time.

What then is our business, living as we do in the midst of this shaky world? It clearly is, as the close of our chapter states, to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” To be acceptable, our service must be in accord with His revealed mind and will for the present time. We are not sent to prop up the crumbling world-system, since God as “a consuming fire” will deal with it in its season. God’s expressed purpose for this time is the taking out of the nations “a people for His name” (Acts 15: 14). And His purpose further includes, “the perfecting of the saints . . . the work of the ministry . . . the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4: 12).

May God stir us all up to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear, while we still find ourselves amidst these preliminary shakings that mark this present evil age.

OUR GUIDANCE

“**I**F I have no motive but my Father’s will, how astonishingly it simplifies everything. If you never thought of doing a thing, except because it was God’s positive will that you should do it, how many things of your life would at once disappear; not in a constant struggle against one thing and another, but in the quiet consciousness that the grace of God has provided for everything, that you do not take a step but what His love has provided for.”

J.N.D.

THE SOWER AND THE HARVEST

J. T. MAWSON.

“ He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him ” (Psa. 126: 6).

THE key to all Old Testament Scripture was indicated by the Lord Jesus when He ministered to His disciples “ things concerning Himself,” out of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets. He is the fulfiller of all Scripture and so of the passage before us. That this is the case here is evident, for He said, “ He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man ” (Matt. 13: 37), and “ The seed is the word of God ” (Luke 8: 11).

He came into the world to cast into the soil the incorruptible seed, the word of God which endureth for ever, for in these last days God hath spoken to us in Him. He came to make God known to men, to declare the Father in whose bosom He dwelt as the only begotten Son; and in doing this He was the great Sower of the seed.

In all His words and works He sowed the seed, but it was at the cross of Calvary that God’s nature and character were disclosed in all the fulness of their glory; it was there as nowhere else that He appeared as the Sower sowing the seed, and it was there that He sounded the very depths of sorrow.

When the Son of God came into this world He had a great and high purpose in coming; He sowed the seed in view of the harvest; for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame. He was in the world to undo the works of the devil, to dispel the darkness that the Edenic lie had

cast as a pall over Adam’s race. He was here to manifest and prove beyond question the love of God to men, to commend that love to them, and to beseech them to be reconciled to the God whose heart yearned with an infinite yearning for the lost. He was here to cast this truth as to God, as the good seed, into the barren soil of the heart of man, that a full and glorious harvest should result for the joy of the heart of God.

He also knew that it involved that mysterious cry that burst from His broken heart, “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? ” What soul in the universe shall discover the intensity of His suffering as He passed into the darkness of the depths from whence that cry came? But in those unsounded depths, while waves of sorrow rolled upon Him, in His own person, the holy, yet forsaken Sin-bearer, there was displayed the unalloyed holiness of God’s nature, the inflexible character of His righteousness and the infinite greatness of His love.

And shall this sowing be in vain? Nay, for every sorrow He shall have an answering joy, out of that suffering and death shall spring such a harvest as will satisfy His soul forever. He shall come again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

In the thrice-told parable of the Sower it is plainly stated that there are to be, in the day of harvest, three distinct results from the seed sown: one-hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold; and whilst this may

be seen even today in the varying degrees of fruitfulness found amongst those who receive the good seed, yet we may also trace in it a very distinct analogy to the three different circles in which the Lord will see of the travail of His soul.

The HUNDRED - FOLD will be realized in the Church

In this connection it is interesting to see that in Luke's Gospel the full one-hundred-fold yield alone is contemplated (8: 14, 15). The Gospel of Luke was written to a Gentile, and by the man who was chosen of the Holy Ghost to write the Acts; it presents the grace of God, not to the Jew only, but toward all mankind; and the truth as delivered to Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles and minister of the church follows in beautiful moral order upon this gospel. These facts confirm the thought that the hundred-fold of the parable in Luke will be brought forth in the church, gathered out to God during this present period from Pentecost to the rapture of the church at the coming of the Lord.

The Holy Ghost dwells within believers to give full effect to the revelation of God made on earth by His beloved Son, and that which is produced and maintained by the Persons of the Godhead cannot fail, and fruit will be brought forth to perfection — one-hundred-fold.

In the church God will have glory by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end; in it will be known the manifold wisdom of God, and through it He will display the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

What a glorious day that will be when the church is completed! Then will the Lord "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but . . . holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5: 27). It will be a glorious day for all who have trusted Him, for then they will leave their sorrows behind and have nothing but fulness of joy before them for ever; they will see Him, whom having not seen they love; they will rest from their labours in the joy of His presence, and find their hearts' full delight without a hindrance in His eternal and changeless love.

But what will it be to Him to receive His church — His bride? For her He gave up the earthly kingdom for the time, and accepted the rejection and despisings of men. For her He sorrowed and bled and gave Himself up to judgment and death. For her He laboured and has had long patience. It is the day of His patience now, He still waits for the glorious consummation of all His work. Oh! what will it be to Him when the day of waiting is over, and He is able to say to His church, "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away" (Song of Sol. 2: 13)? His own love will find its own satisfaction, then, in having the object of it perfectly suitable to and with Himself, in unchanging reciprocal affection forever. Fellow-Christian, this is the grand result for Himself and us, of His time of sorrow and sowing on earth.

There will be another side also to that glory of equal blessedness. The seed which has been sown will bring

forth after its own kind; and the Son of God was the "Corn of wheat," He was the Word of God, in Him every spoken word found its living exemplification, He was all that He spoke, and He fell into the ground and died. In the glorious harvest the "much fruit" will appear all like unto that precious Corn of wheat, for "we know that when He shall appear **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3: 2).

But what will it be to the Son of God "to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24)? What deep satisfaction to Him to lead us into the Father's house, and to know that His Father's desire to have that house filled with sons, for ever conformed to His image who is the Son, shall be eternally satisfied; and this will be the fruit of His mighty victory over every evil power, the glad hundred-fold harvest of His sowing in tears.

The SIXTY-FOLD will be realized in the blessing of Israel

How great and undying is the Lord's love to Israel! To this all the prophets bear witness. It was to Israel that He said "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31: 3). Of them, with grief of heart He had to complain, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? . . . for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hosea 6: 4). "When Israel was a child, then I loved him. . . . I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with

cords of a man, with bands of love. . . . **How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?"** (II: 1-8).

But what tongue shall tell the sorrows of Emmanuel, in the midst of that people, when they mocked at His tender words, and refused all His gracious entreaties? What words can describe the feelings that filled His soul when He had to cry to the rebellious city, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth her brood under her wings, **and ye would not**" (Luke 8: 34); and can we think without stirrings of heart of that moment when He came near unto that city, and when His cheeks were tear-washed in His sorrow for it, as He exclaimed, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!" (Luke 19: 42).

He was cut off in the midst of His days; lover and friend were put far from Him; and He, the King, was led, amid universal execration, by the people whom He loved, to the place of public execution. The people did not know that He was wounded for their transgression, and bruised for their iniquities, and that by His stripes they would be healed; nor did Caiaphas, their high priest, understand the meaning of his words: "Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not," for in so saying he spake "not of himself: but . . .

prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11: 49-51).

For this sowing of sorrow the Lord shall have a great harvest, for "All Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11: 26).

He whom they rejected "will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31: 34). He "will ransom them from the power of the grave, and redeem them from death." He will heal their backslidings and love them freely. Then shall Israel grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his renown as Lebanon. . . . And Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?

Then shall the waste places of Jerusalem break forth into joy and sing together, for the people shall be comforted of the Lord. They shall sit under His shadow with great delight and find His fruit sweet to their taste, they shall be led into His banqueting house and His banner over them shall be love.

How great will be His joy in this day of harvest when He shall see of His soul's deep travail on behalf of Israel, and will rejoice over them with joy, and rest in His love, when He will joy over them with singing; yes, even as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall He, Jehovah-Jesus, rejoice over them.

The THIRTY-FOLD will be realized in the blessing of the nations

When the Lord sits upon the throne of David, His dominion shall

extend throughout the whole earth, for the heathen shall be given Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psa. 2). All the ends of the earth shall look to Him and be saved, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Then peace and contentment shall take the place of strife and clamour. He will:

"Bid the whole creation smile,
And hush its groan."

"His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed," and the whole earth shall be "filled with His glory" (Psa. 72).

His life on earth was but a short one, and thirty years of it are hidden, for the greater part, from us. Three years and a half seems to have been the limit of the time in which He laboured as the Sent-One of God, sowing the seed; and that brief period ended in a shameful cross, so that it seemed as though He had spent His strength for naught and in vain. But, oh, the glory that those years will yet bring forth; how rich the sheaves that He will gather in the glad harvest home.

(1) His church near to His trusted side, all beautiful in His own glory.

(2) Israel, His earthly brethren, brought close to Him; and the chosen and promised land, in which they dwell, the joy of the whole earth.

(3) All the nations of the earth owning His supremacy and rejoicing in a God, the full revelation of whom means only blessing for them.

Such will be the glorious harvest of His sowing in tears. Such the result of the travail of His soul. Yet such will be only as it were the vestibule to the eternal day, when, in the new heavens and the new earth, God will dwell with men, and He shall be "all in all." Those endless ages that stretch beyond the

millennial reign shall also be founded in unchangeable blessedness upon that wondrous visit of the great Sower to this rebellious planet; and that harvest, the first sheaves of which shall be reaped at His coming for His church, will continue for ever and for ever.

THE SAVIOUR FROM HEAVEN

There is One who came from heaven,
From the glory of the throne,
To tread a lonely pathway,
In sorrow and alone.

Oh! wondrous pathway, trace it,
From the manger to the grave,
See the footsteps of the Saviour,
Who poor sinners came to save.

Every step He trod was precious,
Every look and act and word,
Will eternally be treasured.
It was God in Christ — the Lord.

Now His work on earth is finished,
And to heaven He has gone;
The cross and tomb exchanging,
For the brightness of the throne.

And He's waiting there in glory,
For that moment for His heart,
When His saints shall there be with Him,
Never more from Him to part.

And I'm waiting, yes, I'm waiting,
For the path grows drear and lone,
As the loved ones there are gathering,
And waiting round the throne.

What a meeting, there in heaven,
When the last are gathered in,
There assembled in the glory,
Yes, for ever, there with Him.

J. TURNBULL.

SOME NOTES ON JOHN SEVENTEEN

J. HOUSTON

IF we attempt to study the contents of this wonderful chapter, we shall find that we have depths we cannot fathom and heights we cannot scale. Of all chapters in the Bible this is the most difficult, and yet it is the most simple. It is difficult because it contains the words the Son uttered to the Father, concerning His own, that were in the world, the objects of the eternal counsels of the Father. It is simple because the language used in expressing His desires is such as a child could understand. Rarely do we find in the Bible such depths of meaning in words of such simplicity, though this is characteristic of the writings of the Apostle John.

In this short paper we intend to consider briefly a few truths that stand out distinctly. The first of these is,

Eternal life

First of all, the Son gives eternal life to as many as the Father has given to Him. And this is the eternal life, that such should be brought into the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and of the Sent One of the Father, Jesus Christ. The same great fact is stated again very simply at the end of John's first epistle, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

So eternal life lies in the knowledge of Divine Persons, communicated to us by the Son, who also has given us the understanding, by the Spirit, who is truth, and is given to us. Thus it is that we not only know Him that is true, but we are in Him that is true. The Son therefore gives the eternal life to those given to Him of the Father, and He does so as having been given power over "all flesh," for He is, as the Apostle Paul tells us, "the Head of every man" (1 Cor. 11: 2).

Another striking fact meets us,

God is glorified in redemption

Upon the earth God had specially been dishonoured, and now the Son can say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." This finished work of redemption is the basis of the prayer, and upon it the Son places His own. We thus rest in all security upon this finished work of Christ, in which God has been glorified. This is also stated in Ephesians 1: 7, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." The objects of the Father's counsels are redeemed by the work of the Son, in which God is glorified. Then, following on the completion of this work, the Son asks for the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. In this fact His eternal Sonship is seen clearly, He laid that glory down when He came

into Manhood, but now He is to be glorified with that same glory, along with the Father Himself. Throughout the eternal ages He was with the Father, in the glory He is to assume, returning to the Father, after accomplishing the work of redemption. How perfectly this witnesses to Christ's eternal Sonship.

Then again we have,

The manifestation of the Father's name

God in His various dealings with man has revealed Himself under a variety of names. In the beginning of Genesis He is Elohim, the Creator-God. To the patriarchs He made Himself known as El Shaddai, the all-sufficient God. Then to Israel He revealed Himself as Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God. Here we have Him revealed with the name of Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was the Son who revealed Him as Father. "I have manifested Thy name to the men that Thou gavest Me out of the world." These men, to whom He refers, are none other than those who were the Father's. "Thine they were," the Son says of them, "and Thou gavest them Me." So they were the Father's in eternity, and the Father gave them to the Son in time. Well might we sing,

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

The name of the Father was revealed in the words the Son brought from the Father. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." The men, whom the Father gave the Son out of the world, received the words which the Father gave the Son to give to them. As a result they knew assuredly that the Son came out from being with the Father, and believed that the Father did send Him. These were the sure marks on these men, that showed they were given to the Son from God, and had eternal life in the Son. How marvellous is all this! Who can fathom the depths of Divine love, revealed here in the Father's name?

Then the Son says,

"I pray for them"

It is remarkable that He should say to the Father that He prayed for these men and not for the world. These men who belonged to the Father known by Him from eternity, are before Him and not this passing world, which is fleeting like a shadow. The eternal Son speaks of eternal counsel and eternal life — these are the things that occupy the Lord as He unbosoms His desires for His own before the Father. They were in the world, but were not of the world. He prayed for them to be kept. They were the Father's, and the Father gave them to Him, and He was glorified in them.

When He was with them in the world, He kept them and none of them was lost but Judas, who was "the son of perdition," and this took place that the scripture might be fulfilled. He did not pray that the Father should take them out of the world, but that He should keep them from the evil. Since they were not of the world, even as He was not of the world, He desired them to be sanctified through the truth. The Father's word is truth; the true means of sanctification.

The prayer was not only for the disciples who surrounded Him, but also for those who in future days would believe on Him through the testimony the disciples would give. All were to be one, as the Father was in the Son and the Son in the Father. Their oneness would exist in the Father and in the Son, and therefore be a vital and an abiding thing. What a marvellous unity! It exists as a divinely established thing, though it may be but poorly displayed by us at present.

Finally, the Son asks that those whom the Father had given to Him might be with Him, in His very presence, that they might behold His glory, which the Father had given Him, for the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world. The glory, which the Son desired His own to behold, when

with Him in glory, was the glory the Father would give Him in answer to all His humiliation and suffering. The privilege of being with Him, and beholding His glory, was great indeed. It shows how fully His love would go into everything on behalf of those who were dear to Him. Not that they were anything great in themselves, but because they were the gift of God the Father to Him. He speaks of them again and again as, "them, which Thou hast given Me." They were to be His companions in glory, as a gift from the Father.

Then, Christ's eternal Sonship is seen again. Speaking to the Father, He said, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." What we see in this is the eternal Son, the object of the eternal love of the Father. "Before the foundation of the world," takes us back into eternity.

When the Son speaks to the Father in reference to His own, He addresses Him as "Holy Father." The world having departed from God, is a judged system, **righteously** condemned. Those whom the Lord called His own, were the objects of **holy** love. They were before God the Father, "holy and without blame," and that "in love," as we read in Ephesians 1: 4.

SERVICE AND FRUITFULNESS

THERE is a difference between **service** and **fruitfulness**. Service is more manifested and active, fruitfulness may be hidden. The hand or the foot may serve, and so they should. . . . Fruitfulness is known in the cultivation of those graces and virtues which give real and intrinsic character to the people of God, those habits and tempers and properties of the inner man which, with God, are of great price.

BIBLE STUDY — DEUTERONOMY

F. B. HOLE.

(Chapters 1-7)

THE title of this book, which translated into English, is "Second-Law," indicates its character; for in it Moses recapitulates and enforces the whole law system to which Israel was committed. The second and third verses of chapter 1 remind us that the wilderness journey from Horeb, where the law was given, to the border of the land would normally occupy eleven days; they had taken forty years because of their unbelief. The old generation, that had been at Horeb had died out and so the law had to be freshly emphasized to the new generation. Once given, the binding force of the law remained, as we saw in our last issue, when considering the closing words of Malachi, written probably about a thousand years later.

As much that is contained here has already been recorded in the earlier books we will consider these chapters in rather cursory fashion, though pausing here and there to consider details that seem to have a special voice to us. In chapter 1 Moses has to remind the people of their own deplorable condition. He had been unable to bear by himself their "cumbrance," or as we might say, their "wear and tear," their "burden," and their "strife." And further, that when God had told them plainly that He had given them the land and they were to go up and possess it, they had insisted on sending the spies to see and report. The Divine word was, Go up in **faith** and possess in faith. Their response

was, We want to act, or not act, on the basis of **sight**. In result of course they refused to act. The spies saw giants and fortified cities, whereas faith would see God, and obey His word.

Not sight but faith is what we have today. When the Lord said to Paul, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22: 21), he had before him a mission that to sight was an impossible one, yet to faith one that has been abundantly verified. God chooses, "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," as was seen when Paul reached Corinth, and by Paul's writings in the Scriptures he has edified millions of Gentiles, during nineteen centuries. In the days of Moses, Caleb and Joshua were the men of faith.

In chapter 2 of our book Moses reminds the people of how God had been with them in their earlier conquests. Verses 24 and 31 we should particularly notice. First comes the Divine act: "I have given," or, "I have begun to give." Then comes the exhortation to the people, "Begin to possess." God's gracious dealings with us today are on similar lines, as we see in the New Testament epistles. First, the unfolding of that which He has given us in Christ. Then, the exhortations that we should begin to possess experimentally all that is given, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells us.

Chapter 3 continues the recital of how the power of God had overthrown the kingdoms on the eastern side of Jordan, and how the territory had been given to the two and a half tribes, on the understanding that their armed men should go with their brethren to conquer the western side, though Moses personally would not be with them. He had to acknowledge God's disciplinary action against him. He would die, and Joshua be their leader. He was only to view the land, but not to enter it.

It is a comfort however to recognize that there is not only wisdom but also an element of grace in the discipline that God imposes on His saints. Moses was spared many a heartbreak that Joshua must have suffered, owing to the failures of the people; and many centuries later he was in the land for a brief moment, and Elijah with him. From the top of Pisgah he saw the land filled with the degraded Amorites. On the Mount of Transfiguration he saw not the land but the glory of the One who will at last fill it with millennial blessedness.

In chapter 4 we have further touching appeals that Moses made before the people, urging upon them obedience to the law that had been given, and that they should preserve it in its integrity. They were neither to add anything to it nor take anything from it. This command is repeated at the end of chapter 12, and enforced also as to revelations God has given, in the closing words of the New Testament. The law given to Israel included "statutes and judgments," as verse 5 states, as well as the ten commandments. All these were binding upon them, and Moses

tells them in verse 6, that the keeping and the doing of them would be, "your wisdom and your understanding." That "wisdom," they never had, nor have we ever had it. The believer today however is "in Christ Jesus," and He is "made unto us wisdom," as 1 Corinthians 1: 30 tells us. Here is perfect wisdom indeed!

This chapter also bears witness to the plain and emphatic warning that Moses gave as to the results that would follow their disobedience, verses 25-27 being specially definite, and forecasting their sorrowful history under judges and kings in subsequent centuries. Yet, if in their scattered condition they turned and sought the Lord, in obedience they would find mercy. They had been privileged above all other people, and hence were responsible above all others, yet mercy would be shown. We may remember that at the close of Romans 11, both Jew and Gentile are considered, and the blessing that ultimately will reach both will be on the ground of mercy — "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. We are "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). So in the coming age the mercy of God will be displayed in the church on high, as well as in Israel, at last established in blessing on the earth.

The call for obedience that Moses gave is specially clear and pronounced in the opening verses of chapter 5. Let us notice the four verbs that appear in the first verse — "Hear;" "learn;" "keep;" "do." We are not under the law but under grace,

yet we may well accept these four verbs as expressing what should mark us as we face the many instructions that fill the New Testament. Verbs one to three are really in view of verb four, since all the truth made known through the faith of Christ, and ministered to us, is intended to govern our lives in this world, while we wait for the Saviour, and to come into expression in our actions. The Apostle Paul, who was to be a "pattern" to others, wrote, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, **do**; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4: 9).

And further, in these opening verses Moses made it plain that the law was just as really and truly made with those to whom he spoke as to their fathers, some forty years previously. In all dispensations what God has said at the outset stands. We have to remember this. What God laid down through the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12-14, for instance, as to the Christian assembly and its order, stands throughout our dispensation and is as valid today as in the hour when first it was written.

So the law covenant was made with the generation to whom Moses was speaking, and he proceeded to rehearse the commandments, that first appear in Exodus 20, and then he reminded them that their fathers had been filled with fear when they saw the glory of the Lord at Sinai and heard His voice out of the midst of the darkness and the fire. In result, they begged Moses to receive the words of God on their behalf, for they said, "If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then

we shall die." Now, why this fear of death?

With them it was instinctive, but for us the answer is clear in the light of the Gospel. "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4: 15), and again, it is, "The ministration of death written and engraven in stones . . . the ministry of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3: 7-9). The Apostle Paul has told us that, "the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1: 8), and if the law be used to bring the sentence of condemnation and death into a sinner's heart, it is used in a most lawful way.

In verse 29 of our chapter Moses gives us words spoken to him by the Lord Himself at that time. He knew what was lacking on the part of the people. They had not, "such an heart in them," as would incline them to godly fear and obedience. Later in this book we shall find Moses deploring the same thing and speaking of the people as having no "faith." They had, as no other people had, a religion of both sight and hearing, yet without faith it availed nothing. The Epistle to the Hebrews stands in sharp contrast to this. The Christian Hebrew had come, not to the mount that might be touched and to visible and audible things, but to unseen realities, and hence we have the great chapter on faith, and the statement that without faith it is impossible to please God.

Notice also in verse 29 the words "all" and "always," or, "all the days." Obedience must be **complete** and **continuous**. Under law man is like a boat under strain but held in safety by a chain of many links. If

every link is intact **all** the time, well and good. But, if at any time, just **one** link breaks, the boat drifts on to the rocks as surely as if **every** link had snapped. It is a case of **all** and **all** the time. This is again emphasized in the last verse of our chapter.

As the opening verses of chapter 6 reveal, Moses continued to enforce this fact on the minds and consciences of the people. And what would move them to keep all the laws and statutes that were set before them? Nothing indeed but faith which works by love. Hence in verse 5 we get the words which were referred to by our Lord, as recorded in Matthew 22: 36, 37, and which He called "the first and great commandment." Jehovah is One, in contrast with the many false gods of the heathen world, and if He be the supreme Object of love, obedience will surely follow. Now He had shown His love for Israel by all that He had done on their behalf and this should have drawn out their love toward Him. Yet of course they had not known the great display of God's love in the gift of His Son, as we have known it. We can indeed say, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4: 19), and we know the love displayed in surpassing degree. Still God had shown His love towards them as a people, as they are reminded in the next chapter. They should have loved Him in return.

Their danger would be forgetfulness, as the succeeding verses show, and the same danger is ours today. Hence the instructions given in verses 7-12. They were to **teach** God's laws to their children, to **talk** of them in their houses, and to **write**

them on their posts and gates. Here, we venture to think, is a word we need to take home to ourselves. We may remark of course that the invention of printing has given us an enormous advantage, as compared with some 3,500 years ago. It has indeed; but if we do not diligently study our Bibles, and then teach and talk of its contents, we are culpable indeed.

This leads us to ask all our readers, Do you not only read the Scriptures for yourself, but do you avail yourself of the many opportunities of attending meetings where the Word of God is read and discussed, or where servants of the Lord minister the Word? When you meet with other believers in your homes, does your talk at all centre around the things of God? We are not self-sufficient in these things; had we been, the Lord would not raise up those who can teach and pastor His saints. If we do forsake, "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10: 25), and so get but little in the way of teaching and exhortation from others, our spiritual life and testimony is not likely to be vigorous. We shall have but a poor enjoyment of the blessings that are ours, or of the responsibilities that flow therefrom. May we all be stirred up as to these things.

This exhortation as to teaching God's Word, talking about it and writing it, is followed by a very necessary warning as to the danger that would face them, when they had entered into the land and were enjoying prosperity there. Then, in the midst of pleasant things, they might easily forget the Lord and His

commandments and follow the ways of surrounding peoples, going after their gods. Here too is a word for us, and observing it we may be made wise unto salvation from a similar danger.

We may state the matter thus: times of worldly prosperity are times of spiritual danger, and usually of spiritual decline. The history of Israel exemplified this. Swift decline followed the magnificence of Solomon's reign. The earlier history of the church exemplified it, for when the era of persecutions ceased, and under the patronage of Constantine the church emerged into favour and outward prosperity, rapid decline took place. It is not otherwise in some parts of the earth today; particularly, we may say, in the English-speaking regions, where many are saying, they never had it so good, and are completely indifferent to spiritual things. And what about ourselves? Are we not too often exemplifying the truth of the Lord's words, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24: 12). One might have imagined that much iniquity would stir saints to increased warmth, but it is not so. Increased prosperity leads to increased iniquity in the world, and it affects saints adversely, diverting them from the spiritual realities in which their true life consists.

So the people are plainly warned in the latter part of this chapter how easily they might forget how the Lord had delivered them when they were but bondmen in Egypt, and had brought them forth that they might serve Him and obey His word. They were told that, if they

feared the Lord, and obeyed His statutes, it would be, "for our good always," and that such obedience would be "our righteousness." It would have been legal righteousness, but they never had it. The Gospel does not present this to us, but rather righteousness which is of God.

In the opening verses of chapter 7 the people are plainly told that they are completely to exterminate the nations then in possession of the land. They were to make no covenant with them and to show them no mercy. This command has, we believe, been denounced by sceptics as being savage and utterly unworthy of God, if He is supposed to be a God of goodness and kindness. So let us consider it for a moment. Israel did not fully carry it out, but had they done so, it would have been the third time that God had acted in summary and wholesale judgment.

The first case was of course the flood. Mankind was then wiped off the face of the earth with the exception of eight souls. The second occasion was the destruction of the cities of the plain, including Sodom and Gomorrah, when only righteous Lot and two daughters were saved. On these two occasions the destruction was an act of God — by water and by fire and brimstone. In both cases human corruption had risen to such a height that it could not be further tolerated. This was now the case with the Amorite nations. Some four hundred years previously Abraham had been told, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15: 16), but now evidently it was "full," and God purposed to wipe them out as He

had previously done with the antediluvian world, and then with Sodom, only this time using Israel to do it; and hence, as we shall see, using men to do His strange work of judgment, failure came in, and the work was not thoroughly done, as when God acted by the forces of nature.

Israel then were to have been the executioners of God's judgment on these utterly corrupt peoples, and their extermination was designed to have a salutary effect as regards themselves. It would have prevented their making these marriages with daughters of the various peoples, which was the surest way by which they would catch the infection of their awful idolatrous systems. Their subsequent history shows how their failure in this matter largely accounted for their own constant dabbling in idolatrous things, which ultimately brought about their own judgment and dispersal under the Assyrians and Babylonians. Failing in a complete way to judge and destroy the evil, they caught its infection and fell under its power. The separation enjoined was a natural rather than a spiritual one, but a complete necessity, as God well knew.

Now we as Christians are committed to separation of a spiritual sort, as is made very plain in 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18. Israel as a nation were the objects of God's love, which was set upon them, not because of anything great in themselves, for they were few and insignificant, but because God was faithful to His oath to their fathers; and since they were thus loved they were to be a holy, or separated,

people in all their ways. We Christians are loved in a more personal and intimate way, and therefore our separation and deliverance from this present evil age is even more distinct. We are in the world but are to be kept from its evil, even as the Lord Jesus said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17: 16).

Then as separated from the nations then in the land, Israel was not to fear them, though they were more mighty and numerous than themselves, since God, who had shown His power in dealing with Pharaoh, was still on their side, and would dispossess them "by little and little" — not all at once, but step by step. This is still God's way in dealing with His saints. We do not apprehend everything at once. Step by step we may advance in the things of God. We all begin as spiritual babes, and happy it is if we do indeed move on to become the "young men," and then the "fathers," of 1 John 2.

Once more, at the end of the chapter, they are warned against loving the silver and gold connected with idolatrous images. So they were not to **fear** their power, nor to be **fascinated** with their luxuries. Their subsequent history showed that of the two the ensnaring tendencies of the latter had the more disastrous effect upon them.

And let us remember that the same tendency is operative with us today. Hence the first epistle of John ends with the words, "keep yourselves from idols." Now for us an idol is anything that ensnares, and usurps in our hearts the place that belongs to God alone.

“FAITH” — “SOME BETTER THING”

F. B. HOLE.

THE first verse of Hebrews 2 introduces “faith;” its closing verse alludes to “some better thing,” which God had “provided,” or, “forseen” for us, who are Christians, compared with the saints of Old Testament times. This better portion which is ours does not consist of things visible to our natural eyes, and therefore faith is a prime necessity for us.

Have we all realized what a remarkable chapter Hebrews 11 is? The actual word **faith** only occurs twice in the whole of the Old Testament, and the first of these is a negation, for Moses had to complain of the mass of the people that they had, “no faith.” And this is alluded to and endorsed in Hebrews 3 and 4, where it is pointed out that Israel’s failure sprang from their unbelief; the word that reached them not being “mixed with faith.” Yet in chapter 11 the Spirit of God reveals to us that all that was vital in these godly souls of pre-Christian times was the fruit of faith. What lay so largely beneath the surface in former times, now stands clearly revealed.

We have long thought that this chapter might be summarized under three headings; the first of which is,

Faith saves.

The offering that Abel brought was not the result of a fortunate guess but the fruit of faith, which perceived that on him as a sinner the death penalty rested, and so God could only be approached on the

ground of death. Thus he was accounted righteous, and he knew it. So also, faith enabled Enoch to walk with God, though surrounded by fearful evils, and at last enabled him to escape death by translation. And further, what was it that enabled Noah to persist year after year building the enormous ship on dry land? — which must have seemed ridiculous to the men of his day. It was faith; believing that God would do what He had said He would do. It resulted in salvation when the antediluvian world was destroyed. Yes, it is faith that saves.

But then we pass on to Abraham, and the middle of the chapter shows us that

Faith sees,

for it gives a spiritual conception of things that lie outside our natural vision. Abraham departed from Ur of the Chaldees, though it was no mean city — as modern excavations have proved — to go forth into the unknown. His faith enabled him to envisage a city that had foundations that were laid by God Himself. And so we move on through the patriarchs until we come to Moses, when we find a man, who “endured, as seeing Him, who is invisible.” So clearly it is faith that sees.

Then in the latter part of the chapter we discover that

Faith suffers.

The one who possesses it is endowed with the power to endure. Indeed

we may say that faith never shines more brightly than when it is confronted by adverse power. Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And a long list follows of those who endured persecution and suffering in the energy of faith.

Thus God makes known to us that even in these earlier days, when what was revealed was often in connection with things that were visible, audible and tangible, what was of supreme importance for man was faith. Equally so, indeed even more so, is it thus for us today, seeing that the "better" thing, that we are to know and enjoy, lies outside our natural powers.

Some better thing then have we. Let us notice how this word, **better**, occurs, as we glance over the epistle. To begin with, we have it in chapter 1: 4. The Son, who was the Creator, had become the Revealer and the Redeemer, and is declared to be "much better than the angels." Now the law was given by "the disposition of angels," as Stephen said in his last address, recorded in Acts 7, and this is alluded to in our epistle, when we reach chapter 2: 2. Hence this first great contrast in the epistle. The law conveyed some revelation of the mind of God, and it reached them through angels. The full revelation of God, which lies at the base of the better thing that has reached us, is found in the Son, who stands far above and better than all angels.

The word "better" does not actually occur again until chapter 7

is reached, but there it occurs thrice. In the first case it stands connected with a type. The priesthood of Christ is "after the order of Melchizedec," and eternal. Now Melchizedec blessed Abraham, out of whom sprang the Aaronic priesthood, and he who blesses is better than the one who is blessed. The priesthood of Christ is eternal, and exists far above Aaron and his family, established under the law.

Then, as verses 18 and 19 remind us, the law made nothing perfect, and so the commandment going before is set aside, and a better hope is brought in. Now why is the better thing spoken of as a hope? Our reply would be that, as stated in chapter 3: 1, ours is a "heavenly calling," that will not be fully realized until heaven itself is reached. Hence a large element of hope enters into the Christian calling, and is of a character that surpasses any hope connected with the calling of Israel. But though this is the case its present effect is to bring us near to God. Before Christ came and accomplished His redeeming work, the way into the holiest was not made manifest. Now it is, and we have boldness of access to God, as is stated in chapter 10.

Verse 22 makes this manifest, for a new "testament," or "covenant" has been established, and of this covenant the Lord Jesus is the "Surety." If at this point the reader will turn to Genesis 43, and particularly note verse 9, the force of "surety" will be plain. The new covenant is a declaration of the grace of God; and it is as if our Lord said, "Should it not stand imperish-

able and for ever, let Me bear the blame of it for ever." Stand it will, for it is "the everlasting covenant," as chapter 13 states; and how much better it is than the old covenant of Sinai is abundantly clear. This is confirmed when we reach chapter 8: 6, where the promises connected with it are mentioned. The hope connected with these promises we have just referred to.

If we pass on now to chapter 9: 23, we get the statement that the heavenly things themselves are purified with better sacrifices than those offered under the law for the purification of the patterns of those heavenly things. The word here is in the plural — "better sacrifices," because, we judge, the Hebrew reader is referred back to the first five chapters of Leviticus, in which various offerings were commanded, all of which had typical reference to Christ. His whole pathway from the glory was marked by continual sacrifice, which culminated in the **One** great, atoning sacrifice of the cross, of which the rest of Hebrews 9 speaks. Here indeed was the one sacrifice of infinite value, which far outshines any sacrifice previously known.

The early part of chapter 10 continues this theme, and shows us that sin having been put away by the sacrifice of Christ, the believer today has boldness of access to "the holiest" — the very presence of God Himself. And in the later verses of that chapter we learn that consequently we are possessed of "substance," of an "eternal" nature, which is "better" than anything that was promised to Israel under

the law. Had they been obedient, they would have been prospered and multiplied in their families and all earthly possessions. The Hebrew Christian had substance that lay outside earthly things, in keeping with the fact that they, and we also, are "partakers of the heavenly calling," as chapter 3: 1 states.

It was the realization of this that enabled these early Hebrew believers to take "joyfully the spoiling" of their "goods." It would have been a great thing if, when some of their homes were smashed up by an opposing mob, they had faced the loss with resignation and meekness, but they acutally faced it with joyfulness. It served to emphasize in their minds the glorious fact that their real portion lay outside earth and in heaven, far beyond the power of all their opponents.

And what was it that made the heavenly portion that was theirs so real to them? The answer to this is of course found in the first verse of chapter 11, which in Darby's New Translation reads, "Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." The better and enduring **substance** was **substantiated** to the early Hebrew Christian by faith.

Exactly thus it is for us today. We, who are English-speaking Christians, are like men walking amidst a forest of pleasant and attractive things. The few of us who can look back through sixty or even seventy years, can realize how great has been the advance in pleasant and profitable human inventions. At the moment money

abounds and every kind of invention and contrivance abounds; often useful and always very attractive, and therefore bidding for our attention. Our modern "goods" are very absorbing in their nature, and at the moment there is no "spoiling" of them by active opponents. But what about that unseen, yet better and enduring substance which is ours in heaven? Is faith active with us, so that the unseen, heavenly substance is really filling our thoughts and dominating our lives?

"TILL HE COME"

R. THOMSON.

AS the coming of the Lord for the Church draws ever nearer, the desire of our hearts surely is that we might be more and more acceptable to Him, by doing that which is according to His mind and will. We must be careful however not to suggest that our manner of conduct will determine whether we are caught up at the rapture, or left behind for the time of judgment. The scriptures are very clear and plain on this point. "We shall all [believers] be changed in a moment" (1 Cor. 15: 51, 52). And again the Lord Jesus said, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John 18: 9). He, the Captain of our salvation, is bringing the many sons to glory.

Our responsible pathway here in this world, walking to the pleasure of God, or otherwise, is in view of the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Then rewards and positions of service will be given for faithfulness to Christ, during the time of His rejection by men, and his ab-

"Some better thing," then as compared with what was revealed to the worthy saints of pre-Christian times, has been provided for us, and the knowledge of it, received by faith, is to dominate our lives. But we shall all be ushered into the full enjoyment of our respective portions together. They will not "be made perfect" without us, and we may add, nor we without them; for we shall all reach final perfection together, at the day of resurrection and glory, when the Lord Jesus comes again.

sence from the earth. The parable in Luke 19: 11-27, presents this truth, when a certain Nobleman went away, to receive a kingdom, and to return. Calling to Himself His ten servants — ten, speaks of man's responsibility before God — He gave to them ten pounds, one pound each, and said, "Occupy, till I come." Each received the same gift, just as we each have one earthly life to be lived before the Lord. With this pound they were to trade for the Master, till He returned.

His citizens, the Jews, hated Him, and at the stoning of Stephen, having refused the testimony of the Holy Spirit, they sent, in effect, the message after Him, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." However, the day came, according to the parable, when He returned, and the servants appeared before Him, for examination of their work. One had gained ten pounds, another five pounds, and they were given

respectively authority over ten and five cities. But both are commended as having been "faithful in a very little." Only the servant who hid his pound in a napkin came under judgment.

We do well to place emphasis upon this being faithful in a **very little**, for this is a day when the "little things" are overlooked in the seeking of greater things, and faithfulness to the interests of Christ is not eagerly sought after. If we consider a few of these "little things," as indicated in the Scriptures, we see how Christ can be magnified in the doing of them.

"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these **little ones** a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10: 42). And further, meeting the bodily needs of the Lord's servants: showing hospitality to the stranger: visiting the sick and afflicted: providing clothing for the naked, will be acknowledged, as we see in Matthew 25: 35, 36. And again we read of showing "mercy with cheerfulness," in Romans 12: 8; and there is the injunction, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6: 2). There is truth in the lines,

"Deeds of merit, as we thought them,

He will tell us were but sin.

Little acts we had forgotten,

He will tell us were for Him."

The partaking of the Lord's supper is another very precious thing connected with the Lord's coming.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11: 26). This indicates the privilege granted to the household of faith, until the end of this dispensation of grace. This is indeed a cause of much thanksgiving in days of great weakness, when only a few thus meet together in His name. He has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 20). Wonderful faithfulness; His promise will never fail!

So, as the days go by, and His coming draws ever nearer, we have this simple ordinance preserved to us. By this we can remember the Lord, who gave His body and His blood to shelter us from the judgment of sin, and to have us for Himself. May this expression of the fellowship be observed by all who love His name.

But further, we are warned that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, "giving heed to seducing spirits" (1 Tim. 4: 1). We may see something of this seduction in the address to the church in Thyatira as recorded in Revelation 2: 18-29. Many in this assembly were marked by evil teaching and idolatry, meriting the Lord's stern disapproval. However there were some faithful ones, who would not have this evil teaching, nor had they known the depths of Satan in it. To such the Lord gives every encouragement, putting upon them no further burden, but exhorting them to hold fast what they had, till He come. He also promises to give the faithful one "the Morning Star." What a precious word of cheer and

encouragement as the long dark night of evil draws to its close!

We may consider just one Old Testament passage, Ezekiel 21: 25-27. Here we see the Spirit of God taking up the dreadful end of Zedekiah, to speak of the passing of the diadem and crown to make way for Gentile rule, which is to be marked by repeated overturnings, to continue till the coming of Christ to take the kingdom. God's principles however will abide, exalting the humble and bringing down the proud. This was seen in the judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, with whom began the "Times of the Gentiles;" a long period of time, marked by perversion and overturning up to the coming of the Lord to whom the diadem and the crown belong.

Then will be the fulfilment of Psalm 2, "I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." He who has the right and title to rule will establish righteousness with peace over the whole earth, in the glorious world to come.

"Then the wide earth, in glad response

To the bright world above,
Shall sing in rapturous strains of joy,

In memory of Thy love."

We anticipate that blessed scene even now, acknowledging His worthiness, and singing together in unison.

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

THE RIGHT POSITION AND CONDITION

J. T. MAWSON.

THE Lord has been pleased "to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1: 1), and to one of these servants He gave commandment to write the things which he had "seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (verse 19). With regard to these things the Lord has taken up a very definite position, and there is no excuse for ignorance as to His thoughts about them.

The Lord as Judge

It was in a strange and new character that John beheld his Lord in this chapter; not here, as He had

known Him, weeping for the sorrows of the afflicted, tenderly pleading with the wilful, and speaking words of comfort to the broken-hearted penitent, but of terrible aspect and unbending attitude as He looks out upon an apostate world, to scrutinize and judge the great systems that compose it. As undertaking this, as God's faithful Witness and Servant, John sees Him.

He comes forth in all the dignity of the Ancient of Days, the unbroken calm of eternity encircling His brow as a halo.

"His eyes as a flame of fire," to search out the motive of every act

in the world's strange drama, and to trace from its origin to climax every system that rears its head beneath the sun.

“ His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace,” to tread down in righteous indignation all rebellion against God.

“ His voice as the sound of many waters,” the compelling voice of judgment, which, sounding above the frenzied clamour of Satan's poor dupes, will rivet the attention of the living, and call into animation those that are dead.

“ Out of His mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword,” to fight against all evil and to smite the wicked with death.

The World to be Judged

Unregenerate man has continued to build his tower of Babel in defiance of God; and to perfect himself without his Creator is the design that lies at the back of his every activity — whether these activities are political, social, industrial, or religious; and the completion and crown of all the progress in which the world boasts, will be the deification of man, in the “ man of sin,” the son of perdition,” who will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God will sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God (2 Thess. 2: 3, 4).

Everything is, most evidently, with great rapidity, preparing for this; the presence of the Holy Ghost in the true church of God, still on earth, is the only hindrance to its

final development; but when the church is caught up out of the world (1 Thess. 4: 13, 17), which event must be very near fulfilment, then shall this climax of all man's efforts, since the day when Satan declared “ Ye shall be as gods,” be speedily reached.

In the Revelation we have a panoramic view of the clash of the various forces at work in the world: of the rising up out of the chaos resulting of this marvellous production of fallen humanity, after whom all that dwell upon the earth will wonder; and of the immediate and unsparing judgment of God upon the world for this culmination of all blasphemy.

This judgment will be executed by the Lord as the Ancient of Days, and then to Him shall be given, as the Son of Man, “ dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him ” (Dan. 7: 14).

As we read this book of judgments — and there is a special blessing for the reader, verse 3 — we hear ringing clearly throughout its pages the call to the people of God to be in separation from all these things that will call forth His judgment; things which have taken such definite shape of late years that the student of Scripture cannot fail to identify them:—

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues (18: 4).

The Lord and the Churches

We are not surprised that the

Lord is compelled to adopt this stern attitude towards the world of which Satan is the god and prince, for all Scripture bears witness to the fact that evil must come under judgment. In great long-suffering, God may endure for a while the vessels fitted for wrath, giving them space for repentance, but His Spirit will not always strive with men, the limit of evil is set, there must be an **end** to rebellion against Almighty God.

What does astonish us, however, is to find Him standing thus in the midst of the churches, the circle in which, professedly, the name of Jesus is loved and revered, and that they are the first to come beneath the all-searching eyes of flame. And yet this must be so, for how could He deal out righteous judgment to the vast outer circle, if evil were permitted to proceed and develop without detection or rebuke in that which may be termed His own household?

The church was espoused to Christ as a chaste virgin (2 Cor. 11: 2) and should have maintained a place of rigid separation from the world which cast out and crucified her Lord, but instead she has been beguiled and corrupted; first invaded by the same principles, motives, and aspirations that flourish in the world, she has gone down, by a quick descent, as a great system, until as completely assimilated with the world, she will be spued out of the Lord's mouth as a most offensive thing (Rev. 3: 16). This is the sad history of the church in responsibility on earth, given to us prophetically in the letters to the seven churches.

The Cause of the Great Declension

The churches would never have been called upon to hear the rebuke of the Lord for unfaithfulness if they had continued in the freshness of first love. "Thou has left thy first love" discloses for us the opening of the door to the traitor and every evil, for at this point Christ ceased to be paramount. They lost the sense of His great love to them, and He ceased to be the spring of their lives; as a consequence their love to Him began to wane; they owned Him still as Lord and Master, doing His work with diligence, but Himself as the unchanging Lover they had lost, and this was the devil's opportunity.

The Lord cannot brook a rival in the affections of His church, and we can only be acceptable to Him as He sways our hearts and lives as our great and only Lover. An Old Testament scripture (Song of Sol. 5: 9-16) presents Him to us in this character, and the contrast between this description of Him and the way He appears in Revelation 1 is arresting.

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." Here is all the vigour and strength of an undecaying affection; no trace of grey hairs or mark of decline on Him.

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set." Here is described the infinite gentleness of that love which is so strong and changeless.

"His lips are like lilies, dropping

sweet-smelling myrrh." His words woo and win the heart by their gracious and heavenly melody; they are the words of eternal life, sweeter to the heart that knows Him than the honey or the honeycomb, for "His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

It was not the Lord's purpose to disclose Himself in any other character than this to the church, but their infidelity made it a necessity. We see how gladly He reverts to the lover-character when He finds devotion to Himself in the Philadelphian church (Rev. 3: 9): the one sentence that stands out in His words to them is "I have loved thee." Others are to know that soon: they knew it when thus addressed, it was their choice treasure, and He exhorts them to "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

The crown is the highest possession, that which perfects and completes every other, and throughout eternity the love of Christ will be the crown of the church. The earth has lost its crown, but, thank God, this may be recovered now: not by the whole profession, but by all who desire to keep His word, and not deny His name. The way of recovery is clearly stated—**Remember, Repent, Return** (Rev. 2: 5).

"The Disciple whom Jesus Loved"

It is true that even John had to see the Lord as the One who with stern justice would destroy the wicked, but He was to see Him thus as being one with Him in His thoughts, and in communion with all His ways. He stands in this

chapter as Abraham stood in days gone by, before the judgment of God was poured out upon the cities of the plain, when God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Abraham was the friend of God, and John was the friend of Jesus, and every one of us may stand in this relation to Him, for He has said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the several knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15: 14, 15).

It is very evident that this was to be John's position here, and that he was not to stand in dread of the Lord, as would the workers of iniquity, for as he lay prone on the earth, the right hand was laid upon him, and the tender voice that had so often thrilled his soul said unto him, "Fear not," and John was able to arise and view with his Master the "things that are" and the things still to come, and as being in full accord with His thoughts he was able to write that which his eyes had been opened to see for our instruction.

No book in the divinely inspired Canon can be of greater use to us now than the Revelation; if we are to be intelligent as to the times we must understand its teaching; but if we are to do this, and to shape our ways accordingly, we must be in the position and condition in which John found himself when he received it from the Lord.

Let us remember that it was the

disciple who always designated himself as the one "whom Jesus loved," who was chosen by infinite wisdom to write the Revelation; he had the qualifications for it. Attachment to his Lord had led to detachment from the world: this is the true Christian position.

John's story as recorded for us in the Gospel that bears his name is deeply instructive and will help us in this connection. He needed no command to follow the Lord at first, and he is introduced to us as doing this (chapter 1: 37); and in the last glimpse given us of him in the book he is still following without any word of command (chapter 21: 20).

He first speaks of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" when treachery and unfaithfulness were breaking forth amongst the twelve, and when we should have supposed that the chief thing would have been to have had a disciple who loved Jesus, and he continues to speak of himself in this way until the end.

Twice only in the Gospel does he record his own words: first, on the night of the betrayal, he, lying upon Jesus' bosom, said, "Lord, who is it?" and his question revealed the traitor (chapter 13); and then on that fair morning by the sea of Galilee, as he beheld One standing on the shore, he said, "It is the Lord."

"That disciple whom Jesus loved" discerned the traitor, and he knew his Lord, and these two things are the great necessities for us today.

He leaned on Jesus' bosom at the supper table, resting in the Lord as the Lover of His own, and as a consequence he was able to stand beside the cross in the hour of the Lord's untold sorrow; he was also able to stand by the Lord as His friend and servant when as the Victor over death He unfolds the counsels of God in judgment.

As saints of God, we must get into John's place, relying only upon the love of Jesus, in the midst of unfaithfulness and basest treachery, having all the glamour of the world obscured by the brighter light of His glory, who is altogether lovely, and being undeterred from following Him in spite of any course that others may take. Then shall our eyes be anointed with eye-salve, and we shall discern the way of the traitor, and see the hand of the Lord; we shall be enriched with fine gold tried in the fire, and so be proof against all the silver pieces that the world may offer; we shall be clothed in white raiment, keeping our garments unspotted by the world, and so be acceptable unto His eye whom our souls love (chapter 3: 18).

Near to the Lord whose love we know, we shall not be in ignorance as to the trend of the times, but we shall be able in quietness and confidence to await His coming again, meanwhile approving all that He approves, as His friends maintaining His interests and labouring in His name for His glory, and walking in separation from all that must eventually come under His condemnation.

BIBLE STUDY — DEUTERONOMY

F. B. HOLE.

(Chapters 8-15)

IN the opening verses of chapter 8, Moses confronted the people with certain facts that have a very distinct voice to us today. In the first place emphasis is laid again upon "All the commandments," that God had given. There was unity stamped upon the demands of the law system, just as there is upon the revelation that we have in the New Testament — the revelation of God in Christ, and of all purposed and established in Him, as the great expression of grace. Israel had no liberty to pick and choose amongst the commandments, neither have we today amongst the many instructions that grace has furnished.

Then again they were to remember, "all the way," in which God had tested them in the wilderness, to humble them and to reveal what was really in their hearts, and to show them that their real life was not based on material food but on the spiritual instructions and food that is found in the word of God. Here in verse 3 we have the words quoted by the Lord Jesus to Satan in the wilderness temptation that He endured. Israel's wilderness temptations revealed their complete failure, whereas the temptation of our Lord was permitted in order to reveal His absolute perfection. He did indeed live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord;" in other words, His life was one of perfect obedience to the Father's will in all things. We are, "elect . . . through sanctification of the Spirit, unto **obedience . . . of**

Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 2). We are to obey as He obeyed.

Further they were reminded that while God tested them in the wilderness He performed a miracle, lasting 40 years on their behalf. We venture to say that no one else has ever had clothes that lasted for so many years without waxing old and wearing out. There was of course the chastening of which verse 5 speaks, and this may have helped to dull their recognition of the miracle, but even this chastening came upon them because they were a people brought into relationship with God. Men chasten their own sons and not others. This is exactly the principle applied to ourselves in Hebrews 12. So the word is, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" We are further told that though no chastening is a joyful matter, it afterwards yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Israel was to be exercised to keep the commandments, walk in God's ways and fear Him, as verse 6 states, and the more so, since they were to be brought into a land of much earthly prosperity, while we are brought into a wealth of spiritual blessing.

In the latter part of this chapter they are warned of the dangers that lie hidden in prosperity. Then would come the temptation to rest in the luxury, forget God's goodness to them, and be seduced to seek

after false gods. So it came to pass in their history, as we know. Again we as Christians have to remind ourselves that for us also, days of outward and worldly prosperity are times of spiritual danger and defeat.

In chapter 9 Moses reminds the people of the great strength of the people then in the land from a military point of view. Many of the men were giants, and their cities strongly fortified. God being for them, they would have power to destroy them completely; yet that power would be exerted, not because they were so righteous, but because the peoples of the land were so wicked. He virtually says to the people — Don't imagine God will give you the victory because you have deserved it. Then he proceeded, as the rest of this chapter shows, to remind the people of their great unbelief and sin in the making of the golden calf, and their refusal to go up to the land when the spies came back. All this proved that they had no righteousness in which to stand before their God.

What then remained? Well, there was the promise to Abraham, and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, and to this there were no conditions attached, which they had to fulfil. That remained, and that Moses pleaded before God, as verse 27 reveals. The patriarchal covenant was one of grace, and will be made good in the "new covenant," predicted in Jeremiah 31, when the end of God's dealings with Israel is reached. The basis of that new covenant lies in the death and resurrection of Christ, and on this basis the Gospel goes forth today, as 2

Corinthians 3: 6 shows. It is the "everlasting covenant," as we see in Hebrews 13: 20.

Having uttered this plea, Moses ventured to remind the Lord that He had brought the people out of Egypt because of the patriarchal covenant, before the law was given at Sinai. If now, the law having been given, and they having completely failed under it, they were to be destroyed, the Egyptians and other nations would misunderstand this, as meaning that God was unable to complete His work, and bring them into the land He had purposed.

This plea on the part of Moses prevailed, but it did not alter the fact that they were now under the law, and so chapter 10 opens with the reminder of how the original stones on which the law was written, and which were broken by Moses, were replaced on his second sojourn on the Mount. This time they were placed in the ark of shittim wood, as a standing witness to God's holy demands. The appointment of the tribe of Levi at that time to their special service, witnessed to the fact that God still bore with their failure to obey, and to appreciate His kindness on their behalf.

Here again is mentioned what came before us in chapter 6: 5; that which our Lord called, "the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22: 38); for to love God sincerely with heart and soul would carry with it obedience to all the commandments He gave. Hence that word through the Apostle Paul, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom.

13: 10). What should have moved them was the love that God had shown to their fathers, and in choosing them to be very specially His people above all others. How much greater is the love that has been displayed toward us in Christ.

Now in the first place they were, as verse 16 says, to "circumcise" their hearts, as the answer to the love shown to them. We again find the Apostle Paul alluding to this in Romans 2: 28, 29. The rite of circumcision was established in connection with the patriarchal covenant, as we read in Genesis 17, though confirmed later in connection with the law. The inveterate tendency was to observe the outward ceremony and overlook its significance. Israel was to be a people completely cut off for and to God. Had there been circumcision of "heart," there would have been the cutting off of self-love, in the knowledge of the love of God.

The same tendency to lay much stress on outward, visible ceremony, while overlooking the inward, spiritual import, is with us today. Take the ordinance of baptism, for instance. We are not furnished with an exact, detailed description of just how it was administered, hence the much discussion and argument as to the outward ceremony. If as much attention had been paid to the spiritual meaning of the ordinance, as stated in the early verses of Romans 6, we should have gained far more profit. Dead and buried with Christ — our old life, as in Adam, judged — and "newness of life," now to characterize us.

Had Israel circumcised their

hearts, a second thing would have marked them. They would have shown love to the stranger, who might be in their midst. We are to display the love that has reached us by seeking others with the Gospel of the grace of God.

The whole of chapter 11 is taken up with the record of the exhortations that Moses gave, promising on God's behalf a wealth of earthly blessing as the result of their obedience, but on the other hand warning them of the curse that would rest on them if they disobeyed. The land to which they were called was specially dependent for its fruitfulness upon rain from heaven in its season, which, if withheld by God, would bring disaster upon them. That they might obey, they are again told to keep all the commandments continually before them — to teach them, to talk of them, to write them, as they had previously been instructed. If obedient, God would be with them in power that none could resist, and every place whereon they trod should be theirs.

But they were equally warned of the curse that would follow disobedience, and that when in the land there should be a mountain marked by the curse, as well as one marked by blessing. How sadly significant it is that the very last word of the Old Testament is the word, "curse."

Having given this further solemn warning, chapter 12 is occupied with "statutes and judgments" specially relating to their lives when in the land, to which they were going. It begins with the demand that they should utterly destroy the nations

then in the land, and uproot every trace of their idolatrous practices. The chapter ends on the same note, inasmuch as idolatrous evil is very infectious, whereas spiritual good is not. Even in natural things this principle is seen. A good apple placed amongst rotten ones will not remove any rottenness; whereas a rotten apple placed among good ones, will soon spread its rottenness. We must never forget that, though as born of God we have a new nature, yet the old Adamic nature is still in us, and if unjudged it responds at once to all the evil that confronts it.

So all the high places of these nations, their groves, their pillars, their altars, their images, were to be destroyed, and their very names eradicated from memory. We may remember how, when the kingdom was divided, Jeroboam disobeyed this, and the infection of it persisted through all the kings of the ten tribes, and hastened their captivity under the kings of Assyria. All this evil then was to go.

But statutes of a more positive nature follow. When in the land, God Himself would choose a place where His name should be set, and to that place the people were to bring their sacrifices and offerings. There they could eat before God and rejoice, and they are specially warned against what had evidently in large measure characterized them; doing, "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." This injunction was soon forgotten, when for several centuries judges ruled them in the land. The book of Judges ends on the sad note, "In

those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Carefully note that what they did was not what they considered wrong, but right, yet it was not what God had ordered, and hence it was not right, according to Him. How sadly this same trouble has been manifested in the history of Christendom. A multitude of things have been done, and introduced into the professed worship and service of God, because they seemed so right, even to pious people; yet they have been far removed from the simplicity laid down in the New Testament, and observed by the early church under the guidance of the apostles.

So, in our chapter, we have laid down not only the instruction as to the place that God would choose, but also as to how they should bring their offerings, of clean animals, and while shedding their blood, taking care not to eat of it themselves. This is repeated twice in this chapter, and they were reminded that "the blood is the life;" and life comes directly from God; so that when killing an animal they were to pour the blood forth as water upon the earth. This was blood "as water." It is a remarkable fact that when the soldier pierced the side of Jesus, "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19: 34). In his epistle the Apostle John reminds us that our Lord came by blood as well as by water: that is, it not only is the basis of moral and spiritual cleansing but it paid the penalty of sin in the yielding up of His life's blood. It is just this latter fact that many in our day are unwilling to

admit, but which is of all importance. Life comes from God, and the blood being the life of all flesh it is sacred and not to be eaten as a common thing.

It was lightly esteemed among the nations, as the closing verses of the chapter show. Even their sons and daughters they burned in their fires in honour of their false gods.

Another danger might arise among them, when they got into the land, as mentioned in the opening verses of chapter 13. Moses had been their great prophet, through whom God had again and again spoken to them. Now one crafty device of the adversary is to imitate what God does, and so presently there would arise prophets that were inspired not by God but by him, in the effort to lead the people astray. They were not to hearken to such a prophet but rather to put him to death.

Similar tactics of the devil have been used against the faith of Christ, as we see for instance in such a scripture as I Corinthians 12: 3. In the early Christian assemblies, when as yet hardly any of the New Testament had been written, there were men of prophetic gift, who spoke words inspired by the Spirit of God. Men might appear amongst them who spoke as inspired by some evil spirit; and such were to be detected and refused. Hence the injunction, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge" (1 Cor. 14: 29). In chapter 4 the Corinthians had been told not to judge before the time, when they attempted to assess the value of the

different servants of God; but here we find that the utterances of prophets in the assembly were to be heard with godly care and judgment, lest things should be said that were not of God. Similar godly care and judgment is needed today as we listen to what purports to be the ministry of the word of God. It negatives the idea that there may be men who can so speak that everything they say must be received without any question.

In the latter part of this chapter the people are warned against a similar danger, but not from self-styled prophets. There would arise *evil men in their midst* who would divert a whole city from the Lord, to the worship of false gods with their abominations. Such evil was to be utterly destroyed from amongst them, if the fact of it was established beyond all question.

We do well to note carefully the stipulations of verse 14. The judgment was not to be executed until there had been inquiry and search and diligent asking for facts, so that the evil reported was certain and beyond all dispute. Hasty action might easily lead to a miscarriage of justice. If in the church of God today similar diligence and care were exercised, we should be made wise unto salvation from some difficulties that endanger us.

The first 21 verses of chapter 14 stress the fact that Israel as a nation were a people specially set apart to God, and therefore to avoid certain common practices on the one hand,

and to be very careful as to what they ate on the other. The avoidance of the things prohibited would doubtless be for their physical good, and help to mark them off from other peoples. Many centuries later, when in Christian circles those from among the Gentiles soon outnumbered those from the Jews, these restrictions gave rise to the "doubtful disputations," of which Romans 14 speaks. In that chapter the Spirit of God does not legislate but leaves every man to be persuaded in his own mind what he should do. We may profitably transfer the thought to what we may mentally read and inwardly digest. Let us take care that we do not feed mentally on what is impure.

Then the chapter turns from what they should take in as food to what they should give out as tithes, and how they should present it to the Lord. The tithe was ultimately for the upkeep of the Levites whose lives were to be given to the service of God, and also to be used for the poor and needy who would be found amongst them.

Legislation continues through nearly the whole of chapter 15 as to how the poor amongst them were to be considered. Every seventh year was to be a year of release. The well-to-do Israelite might lend money to his poor neighbour, but anything not repaid when the seventh year arrived, was to be released and left in the hand of the poor man. We see therefore that the law demanded a spirit of gracious care for the poor among the people, though this arrangement did not apply to strangers among them. Should there be no

poor, the rule would lapse, but in verse 11 they are plainly told that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." For us Christians it is equally true that there will always be found amongst us those who are "weak in the faith," who are but "babes" in Christ; and those strong in the faith must be careful lest by their "knowledge" they make "the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died" (1 Cor. 8: 11). The poor and weak must be considered.

In verses 16-18, we have a further reference to the law as to the "Hebrew servant," first given in Exodus 21. It is remarkable that it should again appear here, connected with those who are "poor," for in it we see something that found perfect fulfilment in the Lord Jesus. He took "the form of a Servant," and though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, as we told in 2 Corinthians 8: 9. We are again reminded of the piercing of the ear against the door, and this meant the shedding of blood, though it may only have been a tiny drop. As it was in Egypt, so it was to be here, blood on the door but this time signifying the devotion of the One whose blood was shed.

The picture presented to us in this chapter is evidently one of grace, which was to shine out in the midst of the demands of the law. We may well close our meditation on these things by observing that if there was to be an exhibition of grace when law was dominant, how much more should grace characterize all our behaviour today, seeing that we "are not under the law but under grace" (Rom. 6: 14).

THE CHURCH IN ACTION

J. S. BLACKBURN

GOD'S order for His Church is the subject considered in 1 Corinthians. We do not usually think of this as a glowing subject, but if we love the Lord and seek to obey Him, then the subject will glow with the warmth of His love shed abroad in our hearts. Let us take our start from Acts 2: 47: "The Lord added to the Church daily those that were being saved" (R.V.). At the moment when we believed in Christ and received the assurance from His Word that we were saved, another action of the Lord was taking place, for Holy Scripture says that when we were saved, the Lord added us to His Church. Since, therefore, the Lord Himself added us to His Church let us earnestly seek to gather up the instructions He has given in this epistle concerning His order for His Church.

In the New Testament, the word Church or Assembly is used in at least two distinct senses. God "gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1: 22, 23); or again "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might . . . present it to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5: 25-27). In these Ephesian passages the word Church describes the one Church in its totality including all those who believe from the first gift of the Spirit until the moment when we see His face; the Church as that one pearl of great price lovely and perfect in the counsels of God. In contrast with the Ephesian usage we

read of "the Church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1, 2), even of a Church in someone's house. Perhaps the most familiar of all is Revelation 2 and 3 where the seven Churches in the cities named are regarded as distinct companies, each having distinct responsibilities to the Lord who is walking among them and scrutinising them with His eyes like a flame of fire. We are now seeking to enquire what is the order of God for the Church in the latter sense.

Let us think of ourselves as each one a member of a particular local assembly and seek to gather up what the Word of God says about the Church in Action. Obedience to that Word is doubtless seen first of all in the lives of individuals who hear the voice of Jesus calling "o'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea . . . saying Christian follow Me". But obedience to the word of God will also be seen in these local gatherings where there are all kinds of problems, for we have the commandments of the Lord to guide us through these problems.

There are no Church problems in the Ephesian sense of the word. All is perfect, because all is according to the perfect work of Christ and the counsel of God and is brought about by the Holy Spirit. The Corinthian Epistle, on the other hand, which gives us God's order for the Church in a city, is full of problems. In this the Bible agrees with experience, for it is in the local Churches that the practical problems have to be met. Therefore the Corinthian Epistle is

intended to shine down as light upon our pathway so that we may live together and worship together and serve together in the Church in Action. There are the problems; there we need self denial; there we need the sword of the Cross in our own hearts; there we need long-suffering, lowliness, patience, gentleness, meekness, if we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In the measure in which anyone really understands the wonder of the Church in the sense that "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it", that is, in the measure in which the heart is moved by the love of Christ for His Church, then the love that responds will certainly lavish itself upon what represents it, the local community.

The Spirit of God will lead us into the truth, so often overlooked, regarding the place of the Church in the love of Christ and the counsels of God and its destiny in the fulness of time when God brings to fruition all that He has planned and is working out. But we have also to take account of the fact that the Church as seen on earth is shattered and in ruins. If a letter were addressed to the Church of God in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the Post Office would not know what to do with it. It is not possible to deal with a single body in any city which represents in its unity, the body and the bride of Christ. When we reflect upon all the Scripture says about the oneness of the Church and how the Lord Jesus prayed that it might be one, we cannot but realise how much this state of affairs must grieve Him. Yet here is no commission from the Lord for the impossible task of reuniting the Church. If in the pro-

vidence of God I find myself in a community willing to give the Lord Jesus the place that is rightly His and to treat this Scripture as the commandments of the Lord, then I can obey these commandments, and seek to shed abroad the love and care of Christ for His body and to reach those who are still to be added to the Church. There is nothing greater than obeying the Word of God.

Let us consider God's order for the Church in this epistle under five headings.

The Church's Foundation

(I Cor. 3: 10-17)

In this chapter the local Church is viewed as a building and therefore has to have a foundation. Concerning the foundation the Apostle says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ". This takes us back to Matthew 16 where the Lord followed the confession of Peter with the answer "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (the rock of Myself, the Son of God) I will build My Church". If any local gathering is truly to be regarded as conforming to the word of God, it must be built upon the Blessed Person of the Son of God. In Acts 18 we read how Paul laid the foundation at Corinth: he came, he disputed in the synagogue and taught that Jesus was the Christ; when some believed he took them into a nearby house and continued to teach them the things that belong to the Kingdom of God. In our times also, for any community to have the marks of being in conformity with God's instructions for His Church, it would be absolutely

essential that they should be gathering together on the basis of a true confession of the Son of God. It would be impossible to consider a community of Jehovah's Witnesses or of Christadelphians, both of whom deny the deity of Christ, to be built upon the one foundation.

The Person of the Son of God, very God and very Man, is the one foundation on which the Church of God is built. Time spent, therefore, in contemplation of the Son of God is indeed time well spent, and attaches us ever more firmly to that one great foundation.

As we consider the church in its character as a building, we must each face the question whether we are builders, because the local gatherings, often so small, need builders, those who are positively contributing to building up rather than breaking down. The work you are doing is in fact building a Church or it is doing nothing. No other Christian work is envisaged in the Word than that which has as its effect building the Church. Every soul saved is part of the "increase of God" by which the building proceeds.

The Church's discipline

(1 Cor. 5: 7-13)

There are two great bases for discipline. One concerns the truth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the essential foundation. Nothing which has a breath of assailing that truth can be tolerated in the Church of God. The other concerns the truth that "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are". (1 Cor. 3: 17). 1 Corinthians 5 teaches that

there is no place in the Church for manifest unholiness in practice. These two things demand exclusion. Such action is not easy: there is often difficulty and anxiety and darkness in carrying it out, but it is part of the order of the Church of God.

The awful list of crimes in this chapter, are to be dealt with when they come into action, but they originate in the hearts of men and women of like passions with ourselves. Our first concern as individuals, therefore, is to deal with these things in our own hearts in the presence of the Lord before they come to manifest themselves in action. It has been said that if you allow the temper of the dog, the bite of the dog will certainly follow. The temper of these things hidden within my heart must be dealt with in the presence of the cross so that they do not emerge in action. Our chapter teaches this: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

There are elsewhere in Scripture several instructions regarding discipline which require action short of the solemn excommunication here spoken of. If anyone be overtaken in a fault the spiritual ones are to restore him in the spirit of meekness, fearing lest they also are tempted. Those who cause divisions are to be avoided.

In the sad situation where, in order simply to obey the Word of God the act of excommunication be-

comes necessary, then all, though they may or may not understand, can and should mourn and pray and seek to support those who have the responsibility of attending to the matter (1 Cor. 5: 2).

The Church's Worship

(1 Cor. 10: 16)

The statement: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" suggests that the Lord's Supper is the centre of true corporate worship; because blessing is one of the New Testament words which is closely akin to worship. The Lord's Supper (as well as the ordinance of baptism, also one of the commandments of the Lord) must have its right and central place in the order of the Church.

Two Old Testament incidents might be read as examples of putting first things first; and those who put worship first are indeed putting first things first. In the corporate life of the people of God the worship of God must be paramount. When Ezra brought a feeble few Jews back from captivity in Babylon to the city of their fathers, with enemies on every side one would have thought that they would first have fortified the city: and so they did, but not by giving first priority to building the walls, but by building the altar and thus establishing the worship of Jehovah the God of Israel.

In Elijah's day, Israel had as never before departed from Jehovah, the true God of Israel. If there was to be any measure of recovery for these people of God, the place to

start was to rebuild the altar, and this Elijah did, with that bold and thrilling challenge to all the prophets of Baal in the presence of their altar. He built again the altar of Jehovah which had been broken down; he saw what was needed to put first things first. In the Church of God we cannot think too highly of that occasion on which, by the remembrance of Himself in His suffering love and the wonder of His sacrifice, the Lord Jesus leads us to respond in worship to Him who "seeketh such to worship Him". The wise men who came from the east to the Saviour's birth brought gifts appropriate to the majesty of the Babe lying in the manger. They said, "We are come to worship Him; we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him (Matt. 2: 2). As we make our way to the place where, contemplating the suffering of the Lord Jesus we seek to worship the Father, nothing could be greater than to proclaim, "We are come to worship Him".

The Church's Unity

(1 Cor. 12: 13)

It is often true that those who are loudest in their appeal for a reconstitution of the unity of the Church cannot live at peace with the person by whose side they sit in the local assembly. It is little use to speak about unity in the wider sense, when the qualities which stand so close to it on the page of Scripture — lowliness, meekness and longsuffering, one verse removed in Ephesians 4: 2, 3 — are often so conspicuously absent. It has been said that the community which gives up evangelising is finished: it is at least equally true that that community is finished

in which those who differ in their view of truth (short of fundamental error) cannot find the means of living together in peace and love. This is equally valid to whomsoever the words may be addressed. In the Church of New Testament times there existed all kinds of incipient cleavages, such as the differences between Jew and Gentile. Race, diet, habits, lineage, hopes and fears, everything was there to divide, yet the apostle looked to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost to knit them together in one.

The Church's Ministry

(I Cor. 12: 28)

According to the New Testament picture there is the widest possible scope and opportunity for ministry for every man and woman in the Church. There are two lists of kinds of service. In Ephesians 4: 11 the list includes apostles, prophets (foundation gifts), evangelists, pastors and teachers. In Timothy the short list covers offices in the Church: bishops and deacons. In Corinthians and Romans a general view is given showing how every special ability given to God's people in the Church is for the profit of all, and is given by the one Spirit, is under the arrangement of the one Lord, and is part of the operation of the one God.

A most important point here (and the more so because not generally recognised) is the description of a particular type of gathering in this epistle. This coming together "in

assembly" (I Cor. 11: 18 and 14; 19: 28, 35) is indeed an essential part of Church order, and it is in this sphere that there is great opportunity, in addition, of course, to the work of the gospel. In the Church historically, the tendency has always been to put all the service on one man, or all the men on one service. "In assembly", there is not one service but many and God's Spirit acting in many to fulfil them all.

The New Testament is full of the ministry of women. Women helped in the work of the labourer in the gospel, and many other aspects of their work is presented there. May there be given to each a vision of the wideness and diversity of opportunity for ministry in the Church and the abundant blessing and power in God and in the Lord and in the Spirit for its fulfilment.

The thread in I Corinthians which binds together all these details is surely the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. "Jesus Christ the Lord, both theirs and ours" (I Cor. 1: 2). This dominant truth can be traced through the letter to the last page: "If any man love not our Lord, Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The Lord is at hand" (I Cor. 16: 22). This will stimulate us to love and serve Him. The great thought involved in the Lordship of Christ in its application to us is His right to dispose of the lives of His servants. There is no conceivable doubt that the Christian's highest good is to be His and to have our lives, now, henceforth, and for ever in His hands to serve and obey Him alone.

“FOLLOW ME”

A. H. STORRIE.

TWO simple words, but how sublime in meaning, and how infinitely blest are all those who obey their call! As is well known, these words form an invitation that was often and, I think we may say, lovingly, on our Lord's lips. And surely the greatest act of which a human being is capable is to do what these words say. To follow Christ is to step out onto “. . . the path of the just which is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4: 18).

We first meet with these words in connection with Philip; and all we know about Philip is recorded in the Gospel of John. . . And who was he to follow, or accompany? Behold the wonder of it: The Word! The Maker of all things made! The one true Light! The Word made flesh! The Lamb of God! The Son of God! The Messiah! The King of Israel! Is it a small matter to follow or accompany One Who alone can be so described? Why do needy souls not flock to Him in millions in obedience to His loving call? For now His invitation embraces all mankind.

One of His “disciples” excused himself from obeying the call on the ground that he must first bury his father — an Eastern idiom implying that he was devoted to his father (who may have been in perfect health) and could not leave him till he was dead.

It was after the memorable happenings at Caesarea Philippi as re-

corded in Matthew 16, that our Lord spoke the words: “. . . if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.” And is it not significant in its importance that verse 25 occurs in all four Gospels? Are we saving our lives or losing them for Christ's sake? God help us to do the latter! And what an opportunity the rich young ruler missed, hearing the gracious call, but refusing to follow the ever blessed Christ! Matthew, with his money bags, heard and obeyed the call, leaving the service of the mighty Caesar to serve a Mightier than he. Thus we have in our hands today the marvellous Gospel of the King. And how did Matthew end his noble career? According to tradition, by having a spear thrust through his body as he evangelized in India.

Then we have the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John to the direct service of the Master. And surely it is a greater thing to catch men than to catch fish. But what was it that attracted them to Him Who bade them accompany Him? Ah, therein lies the secret of true discipleship; they had a vision of Christ and came to know Who He was. And who would not follow the One so gloriously described in the first chapter of “the most profound Book in the world?”

We close with a reference to the post-resurrection scene. Breakfast is

ready for the disciples who had fished all night in vain, lacking their Master's help. Peter was to follow Him anew and finally thereby to glorify God on a Roman gibbet.

"Never mind what beloved John is to do" — "who also leaned on His breast at supper." "Follow thou Me." May each one of us do so "till travelling days are done!"

"WISDOM HATH BUILDED HER HOUSE . . ."

R. DAVIES.

(Prov. 9: 1)

THE ninth chapter of the Book of Proverbs, from which the title of this article is taken, forms the end of the first section of the book, a section devoted largely to the praise and commendation of wisdom. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom . . . she is more precious than rubies." Nothing can be compared unto her. Undoubtedly, the climax comes in the latter half of the eighth chapter and the opening of the ninth. In these verses, in which wisdom is personified in a most remarkable way, the Christian cannot but think of Him, Who, in New Testament language, "has been made to us wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1: 30, New Translation). As a consequence, wisdom has built her house and hewn out her seven pillars. Seven is the mystic number, the number of divine perfection; a pillar suggests stability. Wisdom's house, then, is characterised by divine stability. In Christian terms, through the Person and work of Christ, the believer enters a sphere of privilege, where all is established to God's eternal satisfaction. The apostle Paul describes this as "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1: 18). Failure and breakdown are inseparable from the domain of human responsibility; Scripture shews this and our

experience confirms it, but there is no breakdown in the sphere of privilege. Wisdom's house remains unshaken, her pillars stand firm and the invitation goes forth, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. . . . Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine, which I have mingled" (Prov. 9: 4, 5).

"Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars." At least one exposition of this Scripture is to be found in the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the seven statements made concerning the Person and the work of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The unique opening of this epistle has often been commented upon. Instead of the customary salutation, the writer begins with the tremendous statement, "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us, by His Son. . . ." God has spoken in a unique way. This is in contrast to His speaking "by the prophets" and "at sundry times and in divers manners". What God has spoken in His Son, far excels that which was spoken through prophets, because of the glory and dignity of the Son and His intrinsic fitness to make God known. His life, death and resurrection constitute the final revelation of God. For this reason,

then, the writer of this epistle brings out the glory and dignity of the Son and of His work, i.e. the seven pillars of divine wisdom contained in verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1:

(i) **“Whom He hath appointed heir of all things.”** All things will be made subject to the Son and He will reign supreme. This is obviously not apparent now. As the second chapter states “now we see not yet all things put under him,” but we know from the same chapter and from the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, that the statement in Psalm 8, “Thou hast put all things under his feet” will find its complete fulfilment in the future manifestation of our Lord’s glory and power.

(ii) **“By whom also He made the worlds.”** The One whom God has appointed heir of all things, is the One Who created them. This accords with the first chapter of John’s Gospel. “All things were made by Him: and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” He created all things.

(iii) **“Who being the brightness of His glory”** or **“The effulgence of His glory”** (J.N.D. New Translation). This is the manifestation to the world of God, Who dwells in light unto which no man can approach. It is not, of course, simply a matter of physical light, but the shining out of the purity and holiness of God.

“There the Father’s love and glory Shine in all their brightest rays.”

(iv) **“And the express image of His person.”** Scholars have pointed out that the word rendered “express image” was used for the im-

pression on a seal or die and was also used for the figure struck off by the seal. In the J.N.D. New Translation, the word “person” (in the Authorised Version) is rendered “substance.” Other translators give “essence.” The word clearly means the “essential being” or “underlying reality.” The phrase “The expression of his substance (or essence)” coupled with the preceding statement, establishes the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; they set forth His Godhead glory.

(v) **“And upholding all things by the word of His power.”** The Son is not only the creator of all things, but One who sustains His creation from day to day. The first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians is in line with this, for there the Son is the One by whom and for whom all things were created and the One by whom all things subsist (Col. 1: 17). What tremendous facts are stated here: the creator of all things and the end or purpose of all things is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Science reveals to us the wonder and complexity of the things which He has created — on the one hand, the vastness of the universe, as vast that the light from fixed stars regarded by astronomers as “near” the earth takes about four and a quarter years to reach us — on the other hand, the complexity of the atom and the power locked in it. Nevertheless science cannot tell us the **purpose** of all things: this the Scriptures reveal.

(vi) **“When He had, by Himself, purged our sins. . . .”** The Son, who made all things, became man and on the cross of Calvary died for our sins. “By Himself, purged our sins.” Who else could

take up this question? Who else could settle it once and for all? There was no other! Psalm 49 states, "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of this soul is costly, and must be given up for ever" (see verses 7 and 8, New Translation). But in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" and again "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He has obtained an eternal redemption (see Heb. 9: 12, 28; 10: 14).

(vii) "Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "On the right hand" symbolises the place of authority and power, of dignity and honour, and the phrase indicates that the Son, His redemptive work completed, now occupies the highest place in the universe of God. Faith sees Him there, "crowned with glory and honour." It is a demonstration of the eternal efficacy of His atoning work. "This man . . . after he had offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10: 12).

No doubt many readers have heard the completeness of the work

of Christ stressed time and time again in the preaching of the Gospel. How important this is. How much spiritual loss is suffered by cherishing the idea that we can, in some way, add to what He has done! What doubts as to salvation arise in the heart and mind of the Christian, who is solely occupied with his own failings or attainments. To be concerned as to our way of life here and now is right and proper; to seek to be consistent Christians is certainly healthy, but in so doing let us not lose the objective side of Christianity, that is, looking outside of ourselves unto Jesus, where He now is. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith."

What then remains? Wisdom has not only built her house and hewn out her seven pillars; she has also furnished her table: all is prepared and the invitation has gone out, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." Does this evoke a response in our hearts? Are we appropriating what Divine Wisdom has provided? To lay hold of these precious things is to have life eternal. This is how Wisdom speaks: "Blessed is the man that heareth . . . for whoso findeth me, findeth life" (Proverbs 8: 34, 35).

THE CHARGE

E. J. GREEN.

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
Nor e'er let me my trust betray,
But press to realms on high.

I AM now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have

kept the faith (2 Tim. 4).

These are the words of an aged man. Not only is he aged; he is Nero's prisoner at Rome. He feels that his life's work is finished. Earth holds no future for him and he awaits the headsman's axe. His real hope is the appearing of our

Lord Jesus Christ and the crown. "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also who love his appearing".

Yet he had his joys. At a previous trial the Lord stood with him and he was acquitted. That had enabled him to preach more widely to the Gentiles, making the period between these imprisonments very fruitful in gospel work and he had lived to see missionaries despatched to Gaul and Dalmatia.

He felt the separation from Timothy keenly and longed to see him. "Come if you can," he says "before the Winter sets in, but if you cannot, these are my final instructions to you." By following these instructions Timothy would be preserving and perpetuating the Pauline influence.

The epistles are in the form of a charge, that is, of a solemn responsibility placed upon him. "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4: 1, 2). "I give thee charge in the sight of God — keep this commandment" (1 Tim. 6: 13, 14). "This charge I commit to thee" (1 Tim. 1: 18). He was to behave himself, in a church of the God that lives, built on earth, to present truth to the world. He was to war a good warfare, that is, show himself to be less timid and more militant. His commission was to influence doctrine, that is, the things taught, in and around Ephesus. This would be done firstly by repressing new and false doctrines. Would be teachers were already at

their stations but they lacked the necessary qualifications for teaching (1 Tim. 1: 6, 7). They emitted empty talk, called vain jangling by Paul, but without understanding what they said and not knowing what they had said, when they had said it. It was mainly about spirits and devils with a tincture of lies and hypocrisy. The flavour was legal; and marriage, instituted by God, to be the bond of man's social life on Earth, was despised. Certain meats were disparaged, though they were gifts from the Lord and therefore to be received thankfully and enjoyed. With all this, there was a claim that it led to a superior piety, whereas it was a false piety, lacking real faith, pure love and a good conscience and having therefore no power to build anyone up in the Christian faith. It was only fit, Paul said, for old wives.

Timothy was to remind the church of known truth, to be himself a good minister (1 Tim. 4: 6), to teach with authority (v. 11), and to rebut the anticipated charge that he was too young to act as Paul's deputy, by an exemplary life of faith, love and personal purity. By private study, public reading and speaking he would demonstrate himself suitable for the appointed service and the worthwhile result of it all would be, the ultimate salvation of himself and of his hearers (1 Tim. 4: 16). Paul wished Timothy to appreciate also that there would be in progress a battle for the minds of his hearers. Under the influence of wrong teaching they would undergo a process of mental deterioration (1 Tim. 6: 5), then finding themselves destitute of the truth, would turn to money making, deceiving themselves into

thinking that money, so gained, would be an indication of their sustained godliness. This love of money, in turn, could lead astray from the faith into all sorts of malpractices, which eventually drown men in destruction and perdition. This fatal end stands in contrast to the salvation of 4: 16, to which sound doctrine brings souls.

Then the charge turns to the truths Timothy was to impart at Ephesus. They were; the good news of the glory of God that had been entrusted to Paul; the profuse grace of the Lord, with the faith and love to be found in Christ Jesus. He was to preach Christ, a Saviour for the worst sinners, who if believed on, would bring them at last to the

life of everlasting. Honour and glory for ever, were to be, not to men, but to God, the eternal King, immortal, invisible and wise.

Special teaching for the rich was a reminder of Christ's teaching in Luke 12 and 16; to make the right use of money; to make sure of an entrance into the everlasting abodes, rather than mere security and ease in earthly homes; and to provide imperishable treasures in the heavens, which the heart could be set upon without the risk of disappointment. The living God could be trusted, the Father, who knows what his children need. A profusion of good works was an admirable kind of wealthiness and an inclination to distribute most commendable.

TWO WARNINGS AND AN EXAMPLE

J. N. DARBY.

WE have in Matthew 26 an example in the case of Jesus, and two warnings in Peter and in Judas.

In Peter we may learn the weakness, and in Judas the dreadful wickedness, of the flesh. We get in Jesus what we should aim after.

In Judas we see the mere professor, in Peter the saint sifted. All three are before us in a time of searching trial, and the result of trial is seen in each.

We ought to remember that we have received the Holy Ghost, which Peter had not when he denied the Lord; yet, having the Holy Ghost, we may still learn a lesson from Peter's flesh. And is not the entire worthlessness of the flesh among the last things we learn? In Peter we see what the flesh is.

There is no real living upon the hope of the glory, except in measure as the flesh is mortified and brought under subjection.

I would dwell first upon Judas' apostasy. He had all the appearance to men of being as the other disciples; he had companied with the Lord, he had been one of those sent forth to preach the gospel and work miracles; but his conscience never was before God. He might have truth in his understanding (and indeed, the understanding does not generally receive truth so readily where the conscience is affected). Again, Judas could not have walked three years with Jesus, and seen His grace and love, and not have had his affections moved. But then his conscience had never been brought into exercise before God. So it is with

many. If we watch the saint receiving truth, we shall often find him slow of apprehension. There is something to be judged before God; something which condemns him, and which involves sacrifice. For instance, we see most clearly that the precious blood cleanses from all sin; but only let us commit sin — and how slowly do we apprehend that blessed truth so as to get comfort from it. In the latter case the conscience is at work. In like manner the affections of the unconverted may be moved: a great company of women followed Christ at the crucifixion, bewailing Him. So we read of “anon with joy, receiving, and by and by (or anon, for it is the same word), when tribulation arises, turning away.”

The natural man wants some thing to satisfy self before God; and until he has done with himself, he will be looking for a certain measure of righteousness before God. He may have been, in connection with this want, instructed in the gospel, and thus the understanding may be clear, and the affections moved; but unless the conscience be bare before God, there is no life.

Here was Judas betraying his Master. After all, what was this? Nothing more, at the bottom, than what is in every heart.

Judas loved money — no uncommon lust. And the love of money in a saint nowadays is as bad, or worse, as being done more in the light.

There was sin in Judas' nature; which sin showed itself in the shape of the love of money. The next thing was, Satan suggesting a way

of gratifying this lust, for he loved money more than he loved Jesus. And now we find the result of outward nearness to the Lord while the conscience is unaffected: it was to make Judas reason upon circumstances. He thought, probably, the Lord would deliver Himself, as He had done before; for, when he found it not so, he threw down the money, and said, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood”. He continues in his nearness to Christ, until, thirdly, we read that, “after the sop Satan entered into him”. In the condition of hypocrisy he gets his heart hardened; and then Satan gets between his conscience and all hope of pardon. Many a natural man would not betray a friend with a kiss, as Judas soon after did. His nearness served only to harden him; and he actually took the sop from the hand of the Lord. Even natural feeling was silenced. So it is when the unconverted man gets into a similar position. He becomes more vile than ever. His heart is hardened. Hypocrisy, and at length despair, ensues. Such is the flesh and its end. And the flesh cannot be bettered by ordinances, even where Christ Himself is. Such is the flesh — I can hardly say, when left to itself, for man is never really independent. He has the will to be so; therefore he is perfectly a sinner, but if disobedient, he is servant to his lust, “disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures”, and slave to Satan. A natural man has a conscience and shame. He will not do in the light what he would do in the dark. But the outward form of Christianity, where it has not touched the heart, only makes this difference. that his conscience is seared, and he is only

more subtly the slave of Satan.

I turn now to the contrast afforded by what is seen in Peter with what we see in our blessed Lord. In Jesus we see the obedient, the dependent One, expressing His entire dependence by His praying. And there was seen an angel from heaven strengthening Him. He felt the weakness which He had given Himself up to bear; He was "crucified in weakness". "All My bones" He says, "are out of joint, my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me." So in the earlier temptation, we hear Him answering the devil out of the word of God. Jesus might have sent Satan away by divine power, but this would have been no example to us. So, in this chapter, we see the Lord praying.

If you compare what Peter is doing with what the Lord is doing, you learn the secret of Peter's weakness and the Lord's strength. What was the effect of trial upon the weakness of Peter's flesh? He had said, "I will go with thee to prison and to death;" but the Lord said to him, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" They were sleeping for sorrow. Here was neither prison nor death. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation (not merely that there be no transgression). Peter entered into temptation; Jesus never did at all. Yet the trial was far greater to Jesus. Jew and Gentile were against Him, and behind them the power of Satan. "This," said He, "is your hour, and the power of darkness;" and again, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful,

even unto death." Where does He take all this? The Lord does not sleep and seek to forget His sorrow. He goes and prays to the Father. His eye rested not on the circumstances to think of them. He looked to His Father. Not that He did not feel; for He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was weakness here as man, and that is real strength.

Remember, if we are in entire dependence, the temptation does not meet us at all. Jesus does not say, "Shall I not go through all these trials?" but, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" He does not see Pilate or Judas in it; it was not Satan that had given Him the cup, but His Father. So with us; if in a frame of entire dependence, temptation does not touch us at all. Trial comes; but, like Jesus, we can say of it, "The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink of it?" Every trial becomes an occasion for perfecting obedience, if near God; if otherwise, a temptation. Jesus was walking with God. It was not that He did not feel weakness. "Tarry, and watch with me," shews the weakness of human nature fully felt. As in Psalm 22: 14, referring to the cross, He says, "I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint: my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels." And yet He shrank not from suffering alone when love to His disciples called for it. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." But being in an agony, He prays the more earnestly; it drives Him to His Father; and that before the trial comes, it is already gone through with God. He presents Himself before them, say-

ing, "Whom seek ye?" as calmly as if going to work a miracle. Whether before Caiaphas or Pontius Pilate, He makes a good confession; owns Himself Son of God before the Jews, and King before Pilate.

How comes this difference? In the first place, with Peter the flesh is sleeping; he goes to sleep to get rid of the pressure of circumstances. Peter has not gone through the trial with God. At the moment when Jesus is going to be led away, the energy of the flesh wakes up, and Peter draws the sword. The flesh has just enough energy to carry us into danger where it cannot stand — that energy deserts us then. How little real communion is here. When Christ was praying, Peter was sleeping; when Christ was submitting as a lamb led to the slaughter, Peter was fighting; when Christ was confessing in suffering, Peter was denying Him with cursing and swearing. This is just the flesh: sleeping when it ought to be waking; in energy when it ought to be still; and then denying the Lord when the time for trial comes. With Christ it was agony with the Father, but perfect peace when the trial came. If we knew how to go on in all circumstances in communion with the Father, there would be no temptation that would not be an occasion of glorifying Him.

The great thing was, Peter had not learned what the flesh is; he did not keep in memory the weakness of the flesh; and thus the condition of dependence was hindered. He seems to be sincere in wishing to own the Lord Jesus and not deny Him. There was more energy of natural and very true affection in Peter, than

in those who forsook the Lord and fled. He really loved the Lord. Peter fails, not from self-will, not from willing to sin, but through the weakness of the flesh. In Christ there was no possible moral weakness, because He always walked in the place of weakness in communion with His Father. Jesus goes — through agony itself — with the Father. Peter fails, though but the shadow of temptation falls upon him. All Peter's fall began by want of dependence, and by neglecting prayer. We must be watching "unto prayer;" not merely ready to pray when temptation comes, but walking with God, and so meeting it in the power of previous communion and prayer. Without continual prayer, and constant sense of entire weakness in self, the more love to Christ, and the more good-will to serve Him in a saint, the more certainly will he, by that very good-will, be led into the place in which he will dishonour Christ. The other disciples that fled did not so much dishonour the name of their Master as Peter did.

It was thus Peter had to learn the evil of the flesh. Jesus on the contrary, ever walked in the confession of dependence — always praying. And what use did the Lord make of His knowledge of Satan's purpose to sift Peter—He prayed for him. The more knowledge, the more prayer. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." As the result of this intercession, Peter learned the evil of the flesh more deeply than the others, and was able to "strengthen his brethren."

We are incapable of ministering truth to our brethren unless we are

conscious of weakness in ourselves. Without the prayer of Jesus, where would Peter have been? He was running nearly like Judas. It is a blessed thing to be kept in entire consciousness of weakness, instead of running on, like Peter, into a place where we cannot stand. How good to be afraid to take a single step without the Lord's guidance. The flesh is ever playing us false — it is good for nothing. The effect of keeping it in the Lord's presence is to have done with it — to be cast on the Father. There is no wisdom that will stand us in any stead but the wisdom that is from above. The Lord knew what the flesh was, and what Paul needed, when he had been caught up into the third heaven. To be taken up to a fourth? No; but a messenger of Satan to buffet: that is, he needed to be brought down. There is the thorn in the flesh given him; there is to be the consciousness that the flesh is worth nothing.

We may notice that there are three ways of learning the power and wretchedness of the flesh: prior to peace, often in desperate struggle; when we have peace, before the Lord in prayer and communion, not daring to take a step till He leads us, and then He is glorified in us in grace and obedience, whatever the trial; or in the bitter experience in which Peter learned it, when flesh is not judged in communion with God. This last will be the way, so long as we are judging of things instead of judging ourselves. When we are faithfully judging ourselves and walking with God, we shall not enter into temptation. Trial may come, but there will be full preparation to meet it; not that we may

be able to say, "Now I am prepared for this or that temptation". We are in no certainty, from one moment to another, as to what trial may be coming; but we shall have the strength of God with us in it. Therefore our only safe place is watching and prayer — yes, prayer before the assault — prayer that may amount to agony: for so Jesus prayed.

We must expect to have our souls much exercised; often it may be, when trial is there, casting about as to why this trial is sent. It may be for a fault; it may be for some careless or hard state of soul. It may be, as Paul's, to keep down the flesh; it may be preparatory to some coming conflict. But in these exercises of soul we must keep before the Lord; then, when trial comes for which the Father has been training us, there will be perfect peace. The Lord will make you bear in spirit with Him, when exercised, the burden which He will make you bear in strength in the battle. Do not shrink from inward exercise; settle it with Him. There is no limit to our strength for obedience when our strength is the Lord's.

"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." None of us can estimate what that cup was for One who had dwelt essentially in the Father's love; but the most spiritual will most acknowledge it. Then holiness itself was made sin; not one gleam of light on the soul of Jesus. At the thought of it, when pressed by Satan on His soul, we see Him sweating as it were great drops of blood. He did not think lightly of sin. The Prince of Life was brought into the dust of death: — "all thy

waves passed over me." At the cross Jesus bore what you will never be called to bear. Beware of denying Him. Our happy privilege is, not to be occupied with the trial as a trial, but to see in every trial an opportunity of obeying God, and to say of each, as Jesus did, "The cup

which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy . . . to Him be glory."

CORRESPONDENCE

In 2 Timothy 2: 20-22 Paul, after naming the various kinds of vessels in a great house, says, "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use."

What do these vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour, represent, and how does one purge himself from them?

AS always it is necessary to see the passage in its context. In verses 16 to 18 we read of teachers of evil things (called vain babblers) of whom two are named — Hymenaeus and Philetus. The foundation of divine truth is however really unshakeable and stands firm, sealed with twin seals (v. 19). The Lord knoweth them that are His: and, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. The context thus shows that the apostle has in mind **doctrinal** evil, and that the faithful individual is to depart from that doctrinal evil. It is this kind of **departure from evil** which is further referred to in the words which our questioner quotes, "If a man purge himself from these."

The picture is of the various utensils in a large house, some reserved for honourable use by the master; but others kept for menial or even unclean uses. The sad truth is that the professing church, called in the first epistle the House of God, the pillar and ground of the truth, was to become, and has in fact become,

a great house harbouring both good and evil teaching. To purge oneself from the vessels to dishonour, is to separate oneself from them, that is, from the teachers of evil. Only thus would the Christian ensure that he is a vessel unto honour, consecrated to the Master's use.

It is interesting that the correspondent tells in the same letter of her experience which illustrates the meaning of this passage. She writes: "I was in great distress . . . as I had been associated with . . . Jehovah's Witnesses, but I had come to see how their teachings were departing more and more from the truth, and I could no longer associate with them." This is an excellent example of what it means to purge oneself from vessels to dishonour.

The passage goes on to assure us that the Christian, faithful in evil days, is not to remain isolated. While links with iniquity are to be severed, we are urged to pursue our pathway in fellowship with "them that call on the Lord" in sincerity.

THE TRUE WORSHIP I. PROLOGUE

J. S. BLACKBURN.

RITUALISTIC worship made its first real impact on me when, by a strange series of circumstances, and contrary to all my habits, I found myself in one of Europe's famous mediaeval cathedrals while Choral Mass was being celebrated. The Cathedral Church of St. Rombold at Malines in Belgium is the seat of an archbishop, and is a most beautiful and imposing edifice. The soaring pillars of the vaulted nave, the clustered columns at the transept crossing, the branching tracery of the clerestory windows and the still figures and deep colours of the stained glass combine to give an air of solemn, timeless other-worldliness which prepares one's senses for further impressions. Ever before the eye is the church's great art treasure, the altar piece by Van Dyck depicting the Crucifixion. There hangs the Saviour between the thieves and there is Mary Magdalene standing by the cross, the living representation of passionate grief.

No choir was visible, but with clearness pure and sweet the weaving threads of counterpoint echoed and re-echoed in the stone vaults of choir and nave. No rhythm marked the time: the strands of timeless melody rose and fell, crossed and re-crossed, grew loud and soft. Very little imagination was needed to believe that this was indeed the celestial music itself, the voices of angels at the gate of heaven.

Against this background of colour and music the service proceeded.

The air was heavy with incense, and the gorgeous vestments of the chanting priests completed a consummately designed and executed impact on the senses, and therefore on the mind, to produce a sensuous effect intended to be conducive to worship.

The impression made on me by all this was intensified by its utter contrast with all I had known and shared in all my life as corporate worship. The points of contrast presented themselves one by one to my thoughts. Instead of the great building having everything that art and man's device could contrive to make it in a material and sensuous way worthy of God, I knew the simplest of buildings within and without devoid of ornament of any kind, having neither cross nor symbol to proclaim them houses of God. There I had known no priest, clergy nor minister as a separate class and with special powers and privileges; any man might speak in his prayer or praise or hymn. There all was spontaneous and extempore: there was no instrumental music — indeed no music at all in the sophisticated and trained sense. When no person felt the urge to open his mouth, there was silence.

My earliest memories included observing these gatherings of men and women of all ages, classes and rank in society, sitting silent and with eyes closed until someone was moved to speak. I soon learned that their eyes were closed for the deliberate purpose of excluding the

diversions of sense, so that there might be less to impair the inner activity of mind, heart and spirit opened up to God. What they said in prayer and worship followed no liturgy; it was the free rising of the spirit in worship. What any person said was eagerly followed by the others, and quiet murmurs of agreement and support were constantly to be heard. The substance of their prayers was permeated with Bible allusions and quotations. These people knew their Bibles intimately and thoroughly, and the quiet responses to the speaker showed that by the shared knowledge of this one Book, heart answered to heart and spirit to spirit, moved by these allusions. Above all, it seemed that the Persons they addressed and spoke about in prayer and worship were Persons they knew, the Father and the Son, and with whom they simply knew themselves to be in a settled relationship never to be broken.

All this centred round the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. At the appropriate time any man who felt moved to do so gave thanks, and the loaf of ordinary bread and the cup of wine were handled by all in exact conformity with Luke 22: 17.

Awareness of so striking a contrast as that described above was among the first impressions leading me to a lifelong interest in trying to understand the "way of God more perfectly" in what concerns the true Christian worship. For our guidance and instruction on this as on all other matters of real concern, we have no other source of illumination

than God and the word of His grace. It is to the Law and the Testimony, to the Scriptures of Truth we must turn, and thus will be fulfilled the Saviour's promise that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all the Truth.

No one will question that the ritualistic worship described owes much to an Old Testament religion. The ground plan of the church comprising chancel, nave and porch, corresponds to the Jews' Temple with its Holy of Holies, Holy Place, and Outer Court or Porch. In both, the inner sanctuary contains an altar. The division of the worshipping people into High Priest, Priests and Levites corresponds to Bishop, Priests and Deacons. In both, the priests are clothed with garments of glory and beauty: the central part of each ritual is a sacrifice, and the priests have exclusive privileges in connection with the sacrifice. Both kinds of service proceed to the accompaniment of music and incense.

It is at the same time equally clear that the ritualistic worship shares with the true New Testament worship this constant dependence on allusions to Old Testament worship. It is worth while to set out this point in some detail, for it can be easily overlooked, and clearly it must be given full weight in any serious enquiry concerning the true worship.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"

(1 Cor. 3: 16, 17). "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 I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Cor. 6: 16). "Now therefore ye . . . are built upon the foundation . . . Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2: 19-22). "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything" (Acts 17: 24, 25).

"We have . . . an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man There are priests who offer gifts according to the law, who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8: 1-5). "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 5). "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us . . . priests unto God and His Father" (Rev. 1: 5, 6). "By Him, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continuously, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13: 15).

"We have an altar, whereof they

have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13: 10). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10: 20-22).

A candid enquirer will notice, in reflecting on these quotations, that although the terms used are terms derived immediately from Old Testament worship (temple, priest, altar, sacrifice, the holiest), yet these terms are frequently employed to point a **contrast** rather than an exact parallel. They seem to say, we **do** have a priest, but quite a different kind of priest: we **do** have a sacrifice, but a new kind of sacrifice. Wherein lie the parallels and wherein exactly lie the contrasts between Old Testament and Christian worship? These are the questions which help render more specific our study. In the pages which follow, these are the questions for which we shall try to find answers in the Word of God.

There is one New Testament passage, not yet quoted, which seems to gather within its brief compass all the allusions already noted and at the same to give in the words of the Saviour Himself the essentials of the answer we seek. This passage may well form the basis of our study: and we shall seek to bring out from the whole range of Scripture some measure of the fulness of meaning contained in every one of the Saviour's words recorded in John 4: 20-24. Read them now and observe

how they take us to the very heart of the matter.

“The woman saith unto him . . . Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

The two examples with which we began represented extremes on a scale of rite and ceremony, of symbol and sense. Another, partly over-lapping, dimension of practice in connection with worship, might be called that of a liberal modernism. Recently, immediately after the news I heard from the B.B.C. the beginning of “An Act of Worship for schools.” It began, so the announcer said, with César Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major, and would end with more César Franck. It included a very nice hymn descriptive of the Saviour’s sacrifice, and a prayer that we might become more like Him. It is very common in Britain to read a permanent notice outside a church inviting all to come and worship. A significant variation on this theme is to be found in a book emanating from the Tractarian Movement of 110 years

ago, noting the attractions of the gin-palace and cheap music-hall, and, since these were so popular and depended on light and music and histrionics for their appeal, that is indeed a benighted outlook which neglects to use these means to allure the man-in-the-street to worship God.

Underlying the three examples thus drawn together is the belief, common to all, that every child at school can be called to worship: that one of the invitations appropriately to be addressed to any man-in-the-street is the invitation to worship or to be taught the forms of worship. These instances naturally raise the question whether it be true that anyone can be taught to worship God. That there is a worship other than the true worship is witnessed by the quotation from John 4, in which we shall seek to find the answers to our questions. To the Samaritan the Lord said, “Ye worship ye know not what.” The Scriptures do accord the name worship to something based on ignorance and not on knowledge — to something quite apart from the true worship. With this agrees Acts 17, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship.” Thus it is also clear that for the true worship all are not qualified. Part of our enquiry will be to find the qualifications, but is it not immediately apparent that the true worshippers know salvation, have passed through the initiatory cleansing, and above all know the Person worshipped?

We have hitherto been thinking in terms of a desire for knowledge and understanding arising from ob-

servation of the varied practices of Christians and we have by this been led to the fourth chapter of John's Gospel: and there all such signposts are eclipsed when we seriously confront the depth and urgency of the quest of God which breathes through the words of Jesus. For what we find there shining forth and meeting our search for knowledge and understanding is nothing less than the quest of God the Father. "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him." In our experience as Christians we have to do first with the quest of the Son of Man, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10). Only through the activity of the seeking Saviour can we be numbered among those capable of the true worship: and we would never wish to move away from the activity of the Saviour's present seeking love. It is never open to us to choose to be devoted to one more than the other of these two Divine quests. A heart and mind truly renewed by the Word and the Spirit will sense to the full the commanding imperative of these two great facts: the Son of Man seeking the lost, and the Father seeking worshippers. If in the pages which follow we concentrate attention on the latter, this is never to

be taken as diminishing the former. The Gospel must ever be paramount among the holy things about which the true Christian ministers to the Lord.

Forth from His eternal glory with the Father, out from the love where-with the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, the Son of God has come. He has come to seek and to save the lost: this quest has led Him of necessity by Calvary. But beyond it there lies this other quest: through Him the Father is seeking worshippers. Only the coming of the Son could reveal the Father. Only His sacrifice could open a new and living way by which we can enter into His presence. The true worship, then, is something beyond the worship of Almighty God: even beyond the worship of Jehovah. The true worship is to worship the FATHER, revealed in Christ the Son. If we have begun to grasp the significance of this central passage, then in the inner chambers of love and devotion, we shall have been moved to desire above all things to respond to this seeking of the Father; and we shall search the Scriptures so that by the Spirit's illumination we may learn how to be among the true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

THE OPENED HEAVENS

F. A. HUGHES.

THE thought of "opened heavens" is not exclusive to the New Testament; there are references bearing upon it to be found in the Old.

In Genesis 7: 11 we read, "the windows of heaven were opened," a scene in which the wrath of heaven was poured out upon a world of violence and corruption. In Malachi

3: 10 we read of God's desire and promise to "open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." A deluge of judgment — necessitated because of the holy character of God; but a deluge of blessing expressive of the love of God's heart.

In Ezekiel we have the only place in the Old Testament where the heavens are actually said to be "opened" for a man to look in. The prophet says in chapter 1: 1, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." What comfort it was to Ezekiel, in a day when God's people had forsaken Him, and were characterized by "wickedness more than the nations" (5: 6), to be allowed this vision of heaven, including the "appearance of a man," and thus to know that God had everything under control!

It is, however, in the New Testament writings that we find the fullest thoughts of the "opened heavens," and we turn with delight to Matthew chapter 3 where we read that when Jesus came up from the waters of baptism "the heavens were **opened unto Him.**" It was a "vision" in the days of Ezekiel, but there is no mere vision here. As another has most beautifully said, "The heavens open upon an Object worthy of their attention The heavens open unto Jesus, the Object of God's entire affection on the earth."

How fitting that this first reference to the "opened heavens" should be the occasion for the Father to express His delight in the Son of His love, "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My

beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." May we not say with profound reverence that the heavens must of necessity be opened upon such a scene, a blessed Man here on earth in absolute accord with the heart of the blessed God. In Genesis chapter 1 the Spirit of God brooded over a scene of emptiness and darkness; now the voice of the Father is heard expressing His delight in One who was to bring into the scene the light of eternal love and fill the whole earth with the glory of God. Is it not our present joy to find delight in this same blessed Person?

Mark in his gospel tells us that Jesus "saw the heavens opened." In this gospel the Lord Jesus is presented as the Servant. His was a service of infinite grace and love, involving the giving of His life (10: 45); but it was a service unappreciated by men. Would not the accents of the Father's voice "**Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**" be the solace and stay of this blessed Man as He pursued a pathway of devotion to God and love to man? May we, too, in whatever little service is entrusted to us, seek only the approval of heaven, experiencing something of the joy that must have been the portion of the disciples of whose service it is said "the Lord working with them" (16: 20).

In Luke 3: 21 the heavens were opened upon Jesus as He was praying. What absolute dependence and joy of communion with His God ever marked the Lord. With what holy joy the Father contemplated One in whom the self-will and independent spirit of this world had no place at all.

How easy it is for us to become marked by the spirit of a world which is alienated from God and marked by self-will. The word of Micah would be a salutary one to each of us, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven and it is our joy to behold Him there. How fitting it is that the first reference to the "opened heavens" in this the Holy Spirit's day should be in relation to a man in whom the moral features of Christ were so beautifully displayed! (Acts 7: 56). Stephen saw "the heavens opened, and the **Son of Man** standing on the right hand of God." We read "the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected." This was Stephen's position as he looked up into those opened heavens, and what comfort it must surely have been to him as he took

account of the place of glory and triumph in which the Son of Man was. The atmosphere of that glory was a known reality to that suffering martyr, and the spirit of that heavenly sphere was reflected in his words and movements.

Peter says in his Epistle — "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the **Spirit of glory** and of God resteth upon you (1 Peter 4: 14). Thus if fidelity to Christ brings reproach on earth, the knowledge of our heavenly portion can be our **present** joy in the power of the Spirit of God.

In the first verse of the Bible the Holy Spirit speaks of "the heaven and the earth;" an order which is consistent throughout Scripture. May we be helped to allow the things of heaven, which have been made available to us in Christ and which are ours now in the power of the Spirit of God, to have the first place in our lives.

THE WITNESS OF GOD

HERBERT HIRST.

AN operation by God has taken place in the soul of the one who believes that Jesus is the Christ, God's chosen and anointed Servant entrusted with the task of carrying out His purposes. This operation is so revolutionary in its effect that the Holy Spirit describes it through John in the first verse of this chapter as the birth of a new nature taking character from the One by whom it is begotten. Chapter 4 has already told us twice that "God is love," that is to say love is His nature, and it is also the new nature

in the one begotten by Him, love towards God and love towards all others in whom the same nature has been begotten by Him.

As this new divine nature proceeds from God, however, the believer's love towards God's children (those others who have derived the same nature from God) is not a mere sentimental attachment to them which could go along with them and encourage them in disobedience to God, if this were to manifest itself. It is a love conditioned by an over-

riding love for God which of necessity produces in one obedience to His commands and the longing to see the same obedience in God's children. To show them the way, by obeying His commandments, confirms to us that our love for God's children is true love (v. 2). Verse 3 reminds us that the only valid test as to whether our love for God is real is the keeping of His commandments. These are not arbitrary and onerous, but good and acceptable, guiding the new nature in the way of God's will.

From verse 4 it is evident that the present world system presents an obstacle, not a help, to the children of God, and its ideas and attractions constitute a perpetual danger to them. It is well to remember that in the eyes of God judgment has already been passed on this world (John 12: 31) and the cause is the rejection of His Son, the refusal to believe in Christ (John 16: 8, 9). How good to know, therefore (v. 4) their new nature surmounts the danger and obstacles, preserving God's children from the world's evil influence. This victory is gained by the "faith" of the believer which keeps God and **unseen** realities ever present to his mind, so that he is not exclusively governed by what he sees in the world around him and remains insensible to its attractions. Faith, not sight, gives the victory, and the principal object of faith is the lowly Man Jesus, realised to be the divine Son of God, rejected by this world but exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He has won the heart of the believer and everything down here in this world has been eclipsed by Him (v. 5).

We now learn that He "came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ." This positive statement is at once confirmed, as often in John's writings by a negative one — "not by water only" — and the positive is repeated — "by water and blood." Someone might say, did He not come by way of the incarnation? It is true that He came into the world by this means; but is not our earnest attention being drawn to the important truth that His coming to us from above would not have been effective by the incarnation alone, great and marvellous as it indeed was? Our glorious Lord achieved His objective — He came — by His death upon the cross. It was there, **after His death**, that the Roman soldier pierced His side with a spear, and "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19: 34). His death procured full expiation to God for sin (the blood's significance) and full cleansing for us (the water).

Cleansing for man could not be obtained except on the firm basis of expiation to God, for it was God against whom man had offended; reparation had to be made to Him, His every attribute maintained and vindicated — His truth, His righteousness, His holiness, His majesty. No purification for man could be obtained apart from this, and so it was "not by water only, but by water and blood." This is indicated by the mention of **blood** first in the historical account of the death of Jesus in John ch. 19. God's holy claim had first to be met. Here in John's epistle, **water** comes first, no doubt because it is our deep interest in Christ's death which is in question and purification from sin is

our great need. Both expiation and purification proceed from the death of Jesus, and v. 6 adds that the Holy Spirit bears witness of these all-important facts in our souls, for the Holy Spirit is the "truth" which came by Jesus Christ, now made real and effective in our hearts.

The truth is that the Lord Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Heb. 2: 9). He became flesh in order to die on the cross, and in His death God "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8: 3), passing judicial sentence on man in the flesh, removing him such as he is in his sin from under God's eye in judgment, in the Person of Jesus when made sin upon the cross. This judicial termination of man's sinful history before God in the cross of Christ declares that there is no life in man for the pleasure of God, since sin has ruined the whole of Adam's race. Death is upon all, by the sentence of God passed in the death of Jesus, and the blood and water are passive witnesses of this solemn fact that there is no life for God in the first man Adam and his guilty race. That order of man has ended, as far as God is concerned, in the death of Christ; if he could not be mended, he had to be ended, and the only way of purification for man is the acceptance of this death sentence by faith in the death of Christ. Thus are we liberated by death from all that the flesh is — "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands (i.e. the doing of God alone) in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11).

testimony agrees with and completes that of the water and the blood (v. 8). This witness is the Holy Spirit. If God called for reliable evidence in the mouth of two or three witnesses in the trial of cases amongst men (Deut. 17: 6), He Himself provides the same adequate witness for us so that there should be no doubt in our minds concerning His gift of eternal life, and the witness of God (the Holy Spirit) is of paramount importance to us (v. 9). The Holy Spirit is an active witness of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus in the glory above. If the water and the blood testify that there is no life in the first man for Christ, the Holy Spirit brings witness from above that the second Man, having achieved His objective in coming here by water and blood (by His death upon the cross), has been placed by the Father, through resurrection and ascension to heaven, in a new sphere where eternal life is indigenous. In the person of Jesus in heaven, man has reached the glorious destiny purposed for him in Christ before the ages of time, and God has thus reached finality in Him. Believing on the Son of God, we have in ourselves the witness which God hath witnessed concerning His Son, and thus we too have reached finality in that we need search no longer for the source of life and joy everlasting. To refuse this witness of God concerning His Son is to make God a liar. John, who goes to the very root of things in this epistle, admits of no compromise, things are either one thing or the other, either light or darkness, truth or error, Christ or Antichrist. If, therefore, we do not receive God's triple witness con-

But there is a third witness whose

cerning His Son, it is not a pardonable mistake on our part but a sin with intensely serious results — that of making God a liar.

This witness of God, for the purpose of bringing certainty to our souls, is that eternal life is in that exalted Man in that exalted place above. The three witnesses agree in one; the water and blood negatively that there is no life in the first man, and the Holy Spirit positively that **there is life**, eternal life, in the Son of God on high. Had the Lord Jesus not died, He would, like the corn of wheat, have remained forever alone in His own life of stainless purity (John 12: 24). But, having died, and ascended in Manhood into heaven, the Spirit brings witness here that eternal life, life of a heavenly order, is to be found in Him where He now is. Man, in the person of Jesus, has reached the place of life and joy purposed for man in Christ before the world was made (Titus 1: 2); eternal life is in that Man and in no other, but all who receive Him by faith have eternal life, and thus the corn of wheat, by dying, brings forth much fruit of the very same order. God's threefold witness (the words "witness," "record" and "testified" in this passage are all from the same root) is that He has given eternal life to those who believe on His Son, that this life is in Him and that He must be possessed in order to possess it. His life is ours, dear fellow-believer, and we are soon to be with Him where He now is, in life's eternal home. He who does not receive the Son, by faith in Him, does not possess this eternal life.

Verse 13 informs us that it was

the desire of John, and, of course, the desire of God who moved him to pen the words, that we who believe in the name of the Son of God should not **only** possess eternal life, but experience here and now the divine joy and satisfaction of **knowing** that we possess it. The Gospel of John was written "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing **ye might have life** through His name (John 20: 31). The object of the first epistle of John is "that **ye may know that ye have eternal life.**" Life can be considered in several ways. One has said that it can be thought of in at least four different ways — life potential, the power behind the machinery, as it were, of a living being; life phenomenal, the movement of the machinery, which can be observed; life historical, the whole course of active existence; and life environmental, distinguished by the character of the environment in which the life is lived. No doubt the greatness of the eternal life we possess in Christ is not merely in that it endures for ever, but that it is the quality of life manifested in the Lord Jesus here upon earth in all its lovely characteristics and previously enjoyed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a life of communion with the Father and the Son, lived in the love of God. It has also been said that "eternal life involves a life communicated, a life lived and also a suited sphere of life." This is the life we have received through faith in the Son of God.

In this strong confidence of faith, we are assured (vv. 14, 15) that His ear is attentive to our requests when they are in accordance with His will. And does not the believer in Him

wish to be preserved from all **not** in accordance with His will? Thus, asking petitions according to His will, we know that we have audience with Him and attention from Him, the granting of the requests we have made. How happy and holy is such a relationship with Him!

Our petitions to the Lord are frequently concerned with our fellow-Christians and we are encouraged to ask on behalf of a brother who sins (v. 16). Now the forgiveness offered to man in the Gospel, through the virtue of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, is eternal forgiveness; that is to say, in the sufferings of Christ on the cross, the sins of the one who believes in Jesus were righteously dealt with; the judgment they deserved was borne by Him and borne completely away; God pledges His word to remember them no more and the conscience of the believer is purified from them; they can never again disturb his relationship with God as one of His children. At the same time, God still exercises His government **in this world**, and His children are not exempt from it though it can never disturb the place prepared for them in the Father's house on high. It can, however, disturb their place on earth; and if a believer commits certain kinds of sins the chastisement of God comes upon him in the way of sickness; the sin may be of such a serious nature that God takes him away by death (see for example I Cor. II: 29-32). There is a "sin unto death," sin of such a character in one of God's children that it necessitates his removal by death, and we are not instructed to pray that the chastisement of God might be lifted from him and his life

spared. For sins "not unto death," this can be the happy result of intercession for a brother who sins. We are left, as ever, in entire dependence upon God, to seek His mind earnestly in prayer as to the category into which any individual case may fall.

In verses 18, 19 and 20, by way of summing up the epistle, three things that we "know" with a kind of inner, vitally concerned knowledge, are brought before us in all their power and blessedness. The first is, that he who has the new nature derived from God, who is born of God, does not practise sin. The believer is here identified with the new nature he has received — it does not sin; it is like God from whom it came in its moral excellence, and the wicked one can get no point of attack against him to ruin him. Do we really "know" this and act accordingly, pursuing all that is pleasing to God?

Secondly "we know" that we trace our new nature back to God; we are "of God," and that this marks us off distinctly from the whole world system of worldly men which is in the grip of wickedness or "the wicked one." This may not be apparent, but it is because the "wicked one" is not apparent. As in the puppet show, he remains behind the scenes, but none the less "pulls the strings" though unbelieving men are not aware of it and are convinced they move of their own unfettered wills.

Thirdly, "we know" three remarkable things in one. That the Son of God has come to us in the manner described in verse 6, and

His coming in that way has been so effective that the Holy Spirit sent down by Him to dwell in our souls has been free to make us really understand what God is like — that we may know Him that is true. How thankful we should be for an understanding which preserves us from the deception all around us, from the “untruth” of a world so largely fashioned by the Devil whom the Lord Jesus said is a “liar, and the father (originator) of it” who “abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8: 44). We now know One who is true and can trust Him implicitly in everything and at all times. Then, “we are in Him that is true,” for we share in His divine nature. The words “in Him that is true” would refer to God the Father, the true God; but the Holy Spirit, through

John, at once declares **how** we come to be “in Him that is true:” it is by being “in His Son Jesus Christ.” And lastly, “This,” we are told, referring to Jesus Christ, “is the true God, and eternal life.” This verse 20 clearly tells how great is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ — He is the Man Jesus Christ; He is the true God; He is the One in whom we have eternal life. This true God is the rightful object of that worship which is due to God alone. If we set up in our hearts another object of worship to come between ourselves and this true God, it is an idol, even though it may not be a material one.

“Little children,” says John’s closing word to us, “keep yourselves from idols.” Shall we respond from the heart: “Amen — so let it be?”

THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD

R. THOMPSON.

TO think of the longsuffering of God, is to magnify His loving-kindness and grace toward sinful man. Our sin and disobedience called for divine judgment; yet God, in His love, has provided a Saviour in His own blessed Son, to deliver us from this judgment. The period of time for the offer of His salvation, is known as the day of grace, and is the longest recorded era of God’s dealings with mankind. It commenced with the incarnation of Christ, and will go on to His coming again for His Church (1 Thess. 4: 15-17).

Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3: 9). So we are to account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. The day of the Lord will begin with judgment; but in the wisdom and purpose of God, this is held back to shew forth His lovingkindness and salvation toward all.

There are many outstanding accounts of God’s longsuffering, both in the Old and New Testaments, and we do well to consider such oc-

The apostle Peter tells us that the

casions. We have the days of Noah, when building the ark, spoken of as such a period, "Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3: 20). The remainder of the habitable world perished, having given no heed to the warning of coming judgment, declared to them for one hundred and twenty years.

Let us go back to the account of this calamity as recorded in Genesis, chapters 4-7. The first suggestion of it was given by God to Enoch, when he called his son Methuselah. This name has been said to mean, "When he dies, it (the judgment) will come." Enoch walked with God; and while enjoying this divine and holy nearness, God's secret of what He was about to do was revealed to him. Truly, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant" (Psalm 25: 14). This babe, Methuselah, lived on for 969 years, the longest lived of any man, shewing God's longsuffering in the light of impending judgment.

Noah, in his day, was commanded of God to build an ark for the saving of life. As the wickedness of mankind grew greater upon the earth, the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be 120 years" (Gen. 6: 3). From this statement we gather that the Spirit of God was speaking to men through Noah, a preacher of righteousness, for that period of time.

Finally, when God commanded Noah and his house to go into the ark, He shut him in; but the flood

did not yet come until another seven days had run their course (Gen. 7: 10). How the goodness of God is magnified against His judgment! Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; but righteous judgment must be executed, for this is God's appointing.

Another outstanding witness to God's grace and judgment, is seen in the circumstances of Lot. Both Noah and Lot are spoken of by the Lord in Luke 17: 26-29 in relation to the day of the coming of the Son of man. As we know from Genesis 13, Lot chose Sodom as a dwelling place, but the people who dwelt there were wicked and sinners exceedingly before the Lord. Day after day, he vexed his righteous soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked, but still abode in the place where he was.

The time was coming, in the will of God, for the overthrow of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; but Lot and his household must first be brought clear of the judgment. However, prior to this, we see the heavenly visitors coming to Abraham, and the Lord revealing to him His thoughts of the impending judgment upon the two cities. Immediately, Abraham the friend of God, began to intercede for the people who dwelt there. How touching to see and to hear this appeal to God, for Him to spare the cities, even for ten righteous souls! Then he left off interceding. Perhaps he thought that such a number would be found; but alas, it seemed as though Lot was the only one.

To behold God's longsuffering and kindness in the sending of two

angels to Lot, for the salvation of him and his house, fills our hearts with deepest thanksgiving. It would appear that the wicked men of Sodom were given opportunity to repent of their evil, but the warning of Lot, even to his sons-in-law, was treated with mockery, and they perished. However, one very interesting feature is the word of the Lord to Lot, saying, "Haste thee, escape hither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." So we see that the judgment of God is stayed until righteous Lot is brought out of the city. His wife, whose heart and interest were in this wicked city of Sodom, looked back, and the judgment overtook her, turning her into a pillar of salt.

Finally, one more beautiful incident of the Lord's longsuffering mercy, is recorded in Luke 19: 41-44, when He wept over the city of Jerusalem. His heart yearned for its citizens, that they might know the things which belong to their peace, as presented in Himself to them. But their hearts were hard-

ened, their eyes blinded, and their ears dull of hearing. Judgment was pronounced upon them of such devastation, that one stone would not be left upon another.

This judgment came upon Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. when the Roman General Titus besieged the city with his armies. There was a terrible slaughter, and the magnificent temple built by Herod, was gutted by fire. The whole city was demolished, and the terrible judgment pronounced by the Lord upon it, was fulfilled almost forty years afterwards. Had the warning been heeded, and genuine repentance toward God brought about, the city might have been spared, as was the case with Nineveh after the preaching of Jonah.

The day of judgment for the world has been appointed by God, and also the Judge (Acts 17: 31). Yet we rejoice in the knowledge that it is still the day of God's grace and mercy, when the appointed Judge, Jesus, is now presented as God's appointed Saviour for sinners.

NOTES ON I JOHN IV

ROBERT DAVIES

The Substance of a Bible Reading

IN this chapter, as in the rest of the epistle, John speaks in absolute terms and presents absolute values. He does this for descriptive purposes, so that the believer may see, separate and pure, the divine life in God's children. We see the world opposed to God, sin to righteousness; there is no confusion between these two principles. Thus

it is necessary and possible to distinguish between the true spirit and the spirit of error: there is Christ and anti-christ.

In the believer John presents only what is of God; he sees in us the divine nature complete and righteous. Hence we "have overcome" (verse 4) the power of anti-christ.

The possibility of our being defeated (though a most important part of the truth about us, fully dealt with in other scriptures) is not here considered. This divine nature in us brings us into communion with all true believers; we speak the same divine language (verse 6).

Our transformation, the indwelling Spirit and our communion all spring from God's love. He desired that we might live (verse 9), and so sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (verse 10). The love which we must now manifest could not exist except on the basis of God's love demonstrated towards us. Our love for our brethren and our behaviour to them must be judged by this high standard; anything less is unthinkable. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (also verses 20, 21). We have no excuse for failure since John sees us as children of God.

What are the fear and torment referred to in verses 17 and 18? These fears are probably felt by those who have doubts of their salvation, neither understanding the perfection of the work of Christ and hence the perfect love of God, nor the "day of judgment." The question of guilt cannot arise for the believer: from the judgment of the Great White Throne, divine love has saved us. (John 5: 24, "and does not come into judgment . . ." New Trans.) At Christ's appearing our new nature will be fully manifested.

It is with the deeds and desires of the new man that John is concerned, and he presents to us God's own attributes — perfect love and perfect righteousness (verse 12) — fully manifested in our salvation. Since we are all recipients of divine mercy, surely the chief lesson of this chapter is that our every action and our judgment of others should be tempered by love.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Speaking by the Spirit of God

In 1 Corinthians 12-14 there is no suggestion that anyone feels a kind of supernatural ecstatic urge carrying him away when speaking by the Spirit of God. That the Holy Spirit operates in the church — that it is His temple — is a fact to be accepted by faith. Our feelings and thoughts when doing so and the tests to be applied are given in chapters 13 and 14. Indeed, the latter chapter may well be summarised as follows, giving the tests by

which whatever is spoken in the Church by one's self or others should be judged (v. 20):

Verses 2-5. Does it **edify**?

Verses 6-12. Is it **clear in meaning**?

Verses 13-25. Is the **understanding** of speaker and hearer satisfyingly involved?

Above all, in chapter 13, the test

is: have I love? We are not, therefore, necessarily to be searching or awaiting a special supernatural urge, for the Holy Spirit Himself is within us and in the Church, and we are to act according to our gifts, soberly estimated, on these principles. It is thus that the Spirit acts in the Church.

The Four Ancient Heresies

“There are but **FOUR** things which concur to make complete the whole state of our Lord Jesus Christ — His **deity**, His **manhood**, the **conjunction** of both, and the **distinction** of one from the other, being joined in one. **FOUR** principal heresies there are which have in these things withstood the truth: **Arians**, by bending themselves against the deity of Christ; **Apollinarians**, by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to his human nature; **Nestorians**, by rending Christ asunder and dividing him into two persons; and the followers of **Eutyches**, by confounding in his person those natures which they should distinguish. Against these, there have been **FOUR** most famous ancient general councils; the council of **Nice** (325), to define against **Arians**; against **Apollinarians**, the council of **Constantinople** (381); the council of **Ephesus** (431), against **Nestorians**; against **Eutychians**, the **Chalcedon** council (451). In **FOUR** words . . . **truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly**; the first applied to his being God; and the second to his being Man; the third to his being of both, one;

and the fourth to his still continuing in that both, one.”

(Hooker: Ecclesiastical polity: Book V, section 54.)

“Blessed are the Meek”

From Psalm 147: 6 we learn that meekness means gentleness and kindness in contrast with turbulence, violence and lawlessness: and from Numbers 12: 3 that Moses is, after the Lord Jesus Himself, the great Bible example of meekness. Moses really had marks that God was working through him, and Aaron and Miriam had plain proof that he was higher than they: but they thought that because he was their brother he could not be higher than they. They were evidently moved by envy. Yet in answer Moses was meek; he did nothing. God intervened to justify Moses and to reprove and shame Aaron and Miriam.

The Lord Jesus was meek and lowly in heart. When He was reviled He reviled not again. When He suffered He threatened not. When He was led as a lamb to the slaughter He opened not His mouth. These last words were written of Jehovah's Servant in Isaiah, and 2 Timothy 2: 24, 25 is an explicit reference to that passage addressed to those who in Christian times are the servants of the Lord. “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in **MEEKNESS** instructing those that oppose themselves.”

2. THE BIBLE WORDS AND THEIR MEANING

FIVE times in the Revelation John records a moment of ecstatic climax, when the dwellers in heaven, seeing the things of earth in the light of heaven, prostrate themselves in the presence of God's throne, and in this act symbolise their worship. In the introductory vision of God on His throne, twenty-four elders are seen, clothed in white, wearing golden crowns and seated each upon his throne. At moments of climax in this tremendous vision — the thanksgiving of the cherubim; the Lamb taking the book out of the right hand of God, the appearance in heaven of the vast crowd of the redeemed; the arrival of the world-kingdom of God and His Christ; and the overthrow of Babylon, the false church — they suddenly rise from their thrones, fling themselves on their faces before God's throne and cast their crowns before Him. Thus dramatically and symbolically they take an **attitude** intensely expressive of their recognition of the supreme greatness of God relative to themselves and seen by themselves. Their **attitude** expresses their **acknowledgement** of the rightness of the fact that all blessing, all honour, all glory, all power is in the hand of God, while they themselves hide their faces in the dust.

The scene described exactly presents the meaning of the Bible word basic to our theme, *proskuneo*. Its simple original meaning is to prostrate oneself before another, and for

the purpose of this study we shall use the English word worship as the exact equivalent of the New Testament word *proskuneo*. Perhaps the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament had primary reference to the **bodily** attitude described, but in the setting of John 4 we may simply begin with the thought that worship is an **attitude** of spirit, taken by man realising the presence of God revealed. In the true worship in spirit and in truth, the worship of the Father, warm and living overtones of love and relationship are added to this basic thought, but here is our beginning, a concept which clearly differentiates worship from thanksgiving, praise, prayer, or service, but indicates also how closely related are each of these actions. We can thank, praise, or serve an equal, but worship is due to God alone. When we do thank, praise, or serve Him, while there is in these actions addressed to God an element of recognising His greatness and awful glory, this element is not the central purpose and content of these actions as it is in the case of worship.

Perhaps at this point reference should be made to those minor and subsidiary cases in which worship is addressed to men. In addressing the mayor as "Your Worship," we know very well that worship belongs to God alone. This is a minor, archaic, and exceptional usage. So it is in Scripture. Those cases in which it is doubtful whether the speaker in the Gospels really intend-

ed to attribute deity to Jesus are examples of this kind. In the parable of the two debtors, the first debtor "fell down and worshipped" the king. Here the expression is evidently equivalent to "did homage." The full New Testament significance is clear in the last chapter of the Revelation. John is twice moved to fall down and worship the angel who explained to him the vision. He is quite sternly forbidden, and the angel's injunction "Worship God" obviously means that worship is due to God alone.

It has already been remarked that all this is closely paralleled by a consideration of the principal Old Testament word signifying worship. There is the same emphasis on the bodily posture as in the Revelation, and the images of that book find many parallels in the Old Testament. Abraham's nameless servant bowed his head and worshipped, and also Moses (Exodus 34: 8). Joshua, realising the presence of God in the vision of the warrior with drawn sword, "fell on his face . . . and did worship."

Thus, our first light on the nature of worship comes from the root meaning of the Bible words employed. We have by this been led to see that, whatever may have to be added by later considerations, the primary thought in worship is that of man, often at special moments of vision, taking in heart and spirit an attitude of acknowledgement of the "worth-ship" of God as at the time revealed and known. We shall see how, in the true worship, which is the worship of the Father revealed in the Son, this is the adoring recognition and appreciation of all

the treasures of the Divine Love vouchsafed by the Spirit to the believing heart.

The sentences in which the Samaritan woman introduced the subject take us a step further in our search for the meaning of worship. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" she said, as the conversation proceeded, "and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Some have considered that she was taking evading action as a defence against an assault on her conscience. That her conscience was reached there can be no doubt, but the serious way her words were taken up by the Lord and the literally epoch-making import of the revelations given her, leave no doubt of her sincerity and indeed that the searching, all-seeing eye of Jesus saw, not only a conscience aroused, but also the awakening of a new life in her which could receive and in the end would understand something of the meaning of His answers. In the interchange of question and answer, as He spoke the burning words revealing the Father's quest, the well of water in her, so newly given, was indeed springing up into everlasting life.

The sentences imply a particular picture intended by the word worship. The Lord took up her statements and added to them. Whatever worship is, the true worship of the future would be in spirit and in truth instead of "in this mountain" or "at Jerusalem;" and it would be addressed to God under His true Name, the Father, instead of His earlier Name, Jehovah. For the moment, however, our concern is

with the light here cast on the real meaning of worship. There is not a word to imply that the Lord disagreed with the meaning she had in using the word. What was that meaning? Or, to frame the question in another way, what did take place "in this mountain" and "in Jerusalem?" She called it worship, and the Lord agreed that it was so.

The opening of the Gospel of Luke contains some delightful specimens of story-telling. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia. . . . And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into Jehovah's temple. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of Jehovah standing on the right side of the altar." The purpose of the narrative is, of course, to tell what the angel said and its results, but a most interesting light is cast upon what took place "at Jerusalem," and which both the Samaritan woman and the Lord named "worship." Note the elements composing the scene: a priest and the priest's office; incense; the temple; the altar; and all in honour of Jehovah.

The twenty-four courses of the priesthood, of which the course of Abia (or Abijah) was the eighth, were instituted by David, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 24. In the Gospel times each course exercised the priest's office in the temple of the Lord for one week at a time, and

each day's services were taken by one or more families of the course. On any particular day, for both the morning and evening sacrifices, four lots were cast and by these the individual priests were chosen to prepare the altar, to kill the sacrifice, to offer the incense, and finally to burn the sacrifice on the altar. The third lot, to offer the incense, was the most coveted and could fall to any priest only once in his lifetime. This was the lot which fell to Zacharias on that great day when the angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to him about the birth of John Baptist. For our present purpose, we must note that though the references to a sacrifice is not explicit, the word "lot" inescapably includes in the scene the sacrifice which had just been killed and was about to be burned on the altar.

There is no direct Scripture evidence regarding the Samaritan worship "in this mountain," Mount Gerizim. For two hundred years a temple stood there in which the pentateuchal system of sacrifices was carried on by a Samaritan priesthood. This is doubtless the worship to which the woman referred, although it has been thought that she was speaking about Abraham and Jacob, both of whom erected altars and offered sacrifices at Shechem or Sychar.

It is thus clear that in the phrases "our fathers worshipped" and "men ought to worship," the word worship is equivalent to **a system of priesthood and sacrifice**, and so also the Lord employed it when He went on to describe the true worship.

Exactly similar further consider-

ations apply to the usual Old Testament word for worship and its meaning. Abraham said to the young men who had so far accompanied Isaac and himself "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." What was intended by Abraham's word "worship" is immediately apparent. "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. . . . And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there . . . and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering. . . . So Abraham returned."

The New Testament and Christian counterpart of this meaning which we have now reached is given in 1 Peter 2: 5. It is one of the great Scriptures dealing with the true worship and must have the closest attention later. For the moment it will suffice to quote it. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here is the New Testament system of priesthood and sacrifice, the true worship in spirit and in truth.

At this point let us summarise what we have learned about the central Bible word *proskuneo*, worship. From the word **itself** in derivation, the meaning is an attitude of mind, heart and spirit taken by man at the moments when he realises the presence of God revealed. From a consideration of the **use** of the word in John 4 and elsewhere, a

greater precision of meaning emerges, and this is a system of priesthood and sacrifice.

Brief mention must be made of other Bible words so closely akin to *proskuneo* that to omit them from our consideration would render it seriously incomplete. In the English Bible, *latreuo* and *latreia* are sometimes translated worship. Fundamentally they mean serve and service; but certain examples show clearly that the service of the sanctuary is what is primarily intended. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which **serve** the tabernacle" (Hebrews 13: 10). "They . . . **serve** Him day and night in His temple" (Revelation 7: 15). "Present your bodies a . . . sacrifice . . . which is your reasonable **service**" (Romans 12: 1). "The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the **service** of God" (Hebrews 9: 6). This usage is so closely akin to *proskuneo*, likewise implying a system of priesthood and sacrifice, that we shall have occasion to refer to it again.

One other Bible word will contribute to our study. **Blessing** (*eulogia* and *eulogeo*) is often given a special meaning when addressed to God, and this meaning is nearly allied to worship and priestly service. The first Bible priest was Melchizedek, of whom we read in Genesis 14. He came out to meet the victorious Abram, and not only blessed Abram, but also blessed God. This dual blessing, coming out from God to men, and then rising from men to God in response, is seen very beautifully in Ephesians 1: 3, "Blessed

be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us." To bless means to "speak good." God's speaking good regarding His people has enriched them beyond all man's golden dreams; it has given them all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Our speaking good to God cannot and does not enrich Him, but such a response to God the Father from His children, answering to His love and

giving Him his true place, ever rises as a sweet savour to Him. Blessing, in the special sense of rising from His children in response to the love of God the Father, is thus something very close to worship. In the Revelation, blessing ever rises in connection with the worship of those who, in heaven, prostrate themselves before Him that sits upon the throne and before the Lamb.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

COLIN CURRY

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross will be our constant and unexhausted theme of remembrance, wonder and praise throughout eternal days.

Much of what follows consists of selection and emphasis upon certain statements from Scripture as to its purpose and importance. It is well in this way to pick out and see a little more separately and distinctly some of the consequences of the death of our Lord Jesus and the reasons why it was so necessary.

The Necessity of the Death of Christ

Among the recorded sayings of our Lord there are many which refer to His death at Jerusalem as a fact foreknown to Himself, the imperative conclusion of His life here, and of unique importance in the sense that so much depended upon it. That He had it in mind all along and that it cost Him much to face it is witnessed by Luke 12: 50. "I

have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" That He treated it as of absolute necessity is seen in John 12: 34; Matt. 26: 54. "The Son of man **must** be lifted up." "Thus it **must** be." The conversation on the mount of transfiguration, it will be recalled, centred on "His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 31. Peter was rebuked for attempting to dissuade Him from facing this (Matt. 16: 21-23). As the moment drew near our Lord expressly says that He came for this reason; "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12: 27, 28). Finally, we may quote His references to Himself in the verse "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12: 24). Here we have a clear indication from

Himself, emphasised by the "Verily, verily" which so often introduces His weighty sayings, of the broad extent of the results of His death, and of their entire dependence upon that death for their accomplishment.

One quotation from the epistles will suffice to supplement these words of our Lord. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9: 16, 17). The context of this passage makes it clear that God's testament, His intention of blessing, is in force now that the death of Christ has taken place and could not be until that was accomplished. The rending of the veil of the temple at the moment of the death of our Lord (Matt. 27: 51) was a most appropriate and significant happening, indicating the removal, by His death, of the barrier which previously prevented God from approaching men in the fullness of His love and intended blessing.

God's Interest in the Death of Christ

This is perhaps not the first aspect of the matter which we naturally consider. Since our own interest in the Lord's death is so very real we tend to begin there. It is none-the-less proper to see that much was at stake besides our salvation and blessing, though the last is also involved in these larger issues. Here, still more than elsewhere, the limits of our appreciation of the work of Christ make themselves felt. Indeed there are suggestions in Scripture

that there is much about His offering of Himself which God alone appreciates. There are some things which believers can share in, but by no means all. Above and before all else Christ's work was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5: 2). The perfection and fragrance of this will be of perpetual remembrance and value. The burnt-offering in Old Testament days was a figure of this. The whole of it was burnt upon the altar and its value and preciousness was for God alone (see Lev. 1). Phil. 2: 8 picks out this aspect of His death. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The passage of which this quotation is a fragment may be taken as representative of several which show that throughout His life as well as in His death it was the will of the One Who sent Him which was His delight and paramount concern. John 17: 4, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do," shews us our Lord anticipating His death and speaking of its end and aim in this sense. It is often said that God is "glorified" in the death of Christ; perhaps a simple explanation of the meaning of this is that God was vindicated in the face of all unbelieving questions which may be raised about Him, and moreover the perfection and harmony of all His attributes were displayed plainly at the cross, in a way which never could have been possible otherwise.

The Defeat of The Adversary in The Death of Christ

Though the full defeat of Satan will only be completely effected at

the end of time, when the devil and death and hades will be cast finally into the lake of fire (Rev. 20: 10-14), God gave promise of his complete overthrow, and of the manner of it, at the very start. "It (the woman's seed) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel" (Gen. 3: 15). The adversary chose to challenge God, and threw the full weight of his subtlety and opposition into the contest once it was opened. As soon as he had made the first move, with apparent success too, God pronounced his ultimate defeat on the very ground he had chosen. God had His man Who would answer this challenge. "By man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15: 21). It is clear too from the first promise in Eden that the suffering of Christ is necessary for the victory over Satan. The devil, try as he might could find no fault in Him. After the temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4: 13) it is said that the devil left Him for a season. His efforts to divert our Lord from the path of the will of God were equally unsuccessful later, though that will involved the untold suffering of the cross. In the Lord's own words "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14: 30). Referring to the hour of His death He could also say, "Now is the Son of man glorified (that is, His perfection was fully manifested) and God is glorified in Him" and "now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 13: 31, 12: 31). The hour of the full display of His perfect manhood and devotion to God was thus the hour of the defeat of Satan. God will certainly and immediately glorify the One Who has achieved this

(John 13: 32).

The cross is thus the basis of the devil's overthrow, though it still awaits full implementation. "The prince of this world is judged" and his fate is settled now in this the Holy Spirit's day (John 16: 11). Another relevant verse is Hebrews 2: 14, 15. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself likewise took part in the same; 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." This draws our attention to the fact that the devil was our enemy as well as the adversary of God. It is true that man was guilty in his fall and our will was involved in our alienation from God; yet in another sense man has been taken captive at the devil's will (2 Tim. 2: 26) and is in the bondage of sin with the fear of death hanging over him. Our Lord has performed the duties of kinsman (see Lev. 25: 47, 48; the same word may also be translated redeemer or avenger). It was the duty of the kinsman to settle with a rightful claimant, answering for the debts and faults of his brother; and also it was his duty to deliver his brother from a stranger or foe. Christ has done both. He has answered to the full for our liabilities before God. But He has also avenged us by full defeat of our enemy. The passage in Hebrews 2 makes it plain that He took part in flesh and blood, becoming a man like ourselves, becoming our Kinsman-redeemer, so that through His death we might be delivered and the power of our captor destroyed.

The Benefits to Believers brought about by The Death of Christ

Reference has already been made to the fact that believers are redeemed and delivered from sin and Satan and freed from the fear of death. They are also said to be forgiven, justified and made righteous. They possess eternal life, and are made children of God. They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God; they are given a hope for the future, and are ultimately to be like Christ, to share His glory, and to appreciate His love in a way which transcends earthly limitations. Out of the numerous Scriptures which speak of these results of our Lord's death, we quote only three which seem to make it specially plain that it is upon our Lord's death that these benefits entirely depend, and which also give some indication of the high quality of the blessings which have been bestowed upon us. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God **by the death of His Son**" (Rom. 5: 10). "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh **through death**, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight" (Col. 1: 21, 22). "He is the mediator of the new testament, that **by means of death**, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9: 15).

More wonderful words than these could hardly be considered. God intervened, through Christ, when we were enemies, transgressors, doing wicked works. It needed His

death to save us from that condition. He has acted entirely on His own, commending His love towards us while we were yet sinners, and has reconciled us to Himself, making us fit to be in His presence and giving us the awareness and appreciation of His attitude of loving favour towards us. The outcome of receiving such favour, and of consideration of the way we have been brought into it, should be that we rejoice in the One Who has done it. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. 5: 11).

The Response in the Lives of Believers which is the Proper Outcome of the Death of Christ

All the results of the death of Christ, so far alluded to, are presented by Scripture as definite and certain. They are not open to question or doubt in any degree.

This final section refers to further results which are of a different character; these are effects which **ought** to follow in the lives of Christian people on consideration of what has been done for them in the way already described. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5: 14-16).

According to this verse we should realise and be profoundly moved by **two** implications of our Lord's death. First, it implies that those who need-

ed such a death on their behalf were themselves dead. We were indeed in a condition which is only properly described in that way; we were impotent and helpless, with no resource in ourselves, and should have remained in that state without outside help. Secondly, an obligation now rests firmly on the shoulders of those who, through His death, have been lifted up from that position and given life. The only right response is that they should no longer live

unto themselves but unto Him. If one reads the context of the verses it is seen that the writer is explaining his own attitude. The love of Christ constrains him to reason and act like this. But, while speaking for himself, he includes others also since it is the only right attitude for all who benefit from the death of Christ. May we who read these words in our day, feel more urgently the impulse of devotion to Him Who died for us and rose again.

PERFECT PEACE

C. Y. RICHARDSON

Isaiah 26: 1-4
 Isaiah 50: 5
 Matthew 11: 28-30

THE scriptures at the head of this article refer to the peace which the Lord would give to His people in times of trouble. The first two verses of Isaiah 26 speak of a time when Israel will be gathered to the land which the Lord gave to their fathers, to be planted there in "peace so long as the moon endureth." "For His mercy endureth for ever." What a blessed time for them, then to be called "the righteous nation" though now a "disobedient and gainsaying people."

What is the reason then for these verses? Why should they be called upon to trust in Jehovah for ever? It may be said they shall at all times have to trust the Lord. This is true, but I am inclined to think there is a special reason. Jerusalem has not yet received double at the Lord's

hand for her sins. A time of persecution exceeding anything they have endured awaits the sons of Israel, called in the end of the chapter "the indignation." Then, as the same verse (20) tells us the remnant are told to enter into their chambers for protection from the judgments. What comfort will these verses bring to them? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever: for in Jah, JEHOVAH is the rock of ages." You will notice I have quoted two names of God. JAH is first used in Exodus 15. Some are of the opinion that it is an abbreviation of Jehovah, others that it refers to His present help for His people. "God is a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46: 1). You will notice too that He is the

rock of ages, the foundation for all their hopes as for ours. May God be pleased to comfort our hearts from this verse. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but we have first the promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," and then the call to trust in the Lord for ever.

"Stayed upon Jehovah hearts are fully blest,
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest."

The next scripture under consideration (Isa. 50: 5) contains the beautiful words, "that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." It is to such saints that I address these remarks. Troubles and afflictions seem to fill our souls as the sea fills a bay. At times we may feel inclined to say as the Psalmist once said, "No man cared for my soul." But this is not the case. He who clothes the heavens with blackness, and whose rebuke dries up the sea, has been here, the Servant of Jehovah, and in the days of His flesh was given the tongue of the learned, that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Think of His saying to the paralysed man, "Son be of good cheer," or to the widow, "Weep not," or to His disciples, "Blessed be ye poor . . . Blessed are ye that hunger now . . . Blessed are ye when men shall hate you." What words in season to the mourners in Zion! And do we not hear His words today? Does He not still say, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint," and again, "Have faith in God." The passages from the gospels are almost endless, nor are they address-

ed to one class only. All could hear words to meet their own needs, coming from One who spoke as none other man did.

With regard to the third scripture (Matt. 11: 28-30), we should notice the setting of these remarkable verses. Israel was on the point of committing the unpardonable sin. The cities which had witnessed His most wonderful miracles had refused Him. What could He do? Only what we may do, He fell back upon His Father. In His case He did so in the consciousness of His divine Sonship. And then there follow the words, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Now I know that these words have often been the subject of gospel preaching. It is indeed a very blessed thing to seek to offer to the needy sinner the Saviour's welcome, "Come." How true it is that He can give rest and peace to weary souls, tired of bearing the burden of sin; and further to point them to His cross, and to the blood of His cross, and then to His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. But in weighing up the context of these verses, I do not think they are addressed to sinners, but to disciples. Can anyone doubt that as disciples of a rejected Saviour we need rest to our souls? Saints of God of the present dispensation are suffering from two points of view. First, because we are suffering as the result of Adam's sin, and second because we belong to a rejected Master. These two events — the fall of Adam, and the refusal of Christ, have a very grave effect on our

lives here. This and other disciplinary ways are here referred to as a yoke — a burden which He gives us to bear. He says, "Take My yoke upon you." Our first reaction might be to say that such a yoke is too heavy, but He says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Do we feel inclined to resist? Then let

us remember that He never rebelled, but was in very truth, "meek and lowly in heart," and if we take His yoke, what will be the result? We shall find rest to our souls.

I have no greater wish than that these words might be true of both reader and writer.

THE OVERCOMER

T. S. DAVISON

(John 16: 33; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8; 1 John 2: 13-17; 1 John 5: 4, 5; Rev. 2 and 3)

EVERY believer is called upon to be an overcomer. The reason is that man's world is completely away from God, and Satan, the usurper, has become its god and prince. Hence, the whole current of this present evil age is contrary to God and to those who have been born of Him. The very word "overcomer" implies opposition and conflict, and it is for this reason that elsewhere in Scripture the Christian life is described as a warfare. It is no exaggeration to say that in every conscious moment of our pilgrim pathway we are either overcoming or being overcome by the spiritual forces arrayed against us.

The Perfect Example

The verse in John's Gospel brings before us the triumphant words of our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of His earthly pathway. From His entry into the world, by way of the virgin's womb and the inn at Bethlehem (where there was no room for Him) He had moved against the stream of this world and its princi-

ples (lust and pride) and now He could say "I have overcome the world." There is rest of heart in viewing Him, the man Christ Jesus as, in absolute dependence on God, and in perfect obedience to His will, filled with the Holy Ghost, He is led of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil. Here is a complete contrast to the testing of the first man Adam in the earthly paradise where every circumstance and all the surroundings spoke of the love and care of the Creator. Into that paradise came the tempter, and, almost without a struggle, our first parents yielded up the citadel to the enemy. They admitted into their hearts his subtle and poisonous insinuations as to God's real attitude toward them, and from thence it was a short step to the fatal act of disobedience to God's plain command. In eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they opened their hearts to the principles which have governed man's world ever since — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and, in effect, they transferred their allegiance from their Creator to Satan.

The same adversary who seduced Adam confronted the second man, the last Adam, but in what different circumstances and surroundings — not in a garden of delight, but in a wilderness, where His only companions were the wild beasts, and where there were no resources to supply His physical needs. But He had been led there by the Spirit of God, in the pathway of the will of God, hence for forty days and nights He fasted, and, as His manhood was real and perfect, He suffered the pangs of hunger. It was in this condition of physical weakness and need that He met and vanquished the enemy, meeting his subtle temptations, not in the majesty and might of the Son of God, but as a dependent and obedient man, using the weapon that is available to every believer, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. By this means only, He successfully resisted the adversary, who in the three temptations presented the same principles to which the first man Adam had succumbed — lust and pride. What a powerful encouragement to the simplest believer to feed on the Word of God! Well might the apostle Paul exhort the Colossian saints to “let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.”

But while the victory of our blessed Lord was in this instance complete, it was not final. In fact, He only demonstrated in it what every man ought to be in relation to God, living in absolute dependence and obedience, and hence His perfection in this respect only revealed the sin and failure of every other man but Himself. Mankind as a whole was under the domination of Satan and sin, and under sentence of death.

Hence, if deliverance was to be wrought for the captives Jesus must meet and defeat the enemy in his own stronghold. In order to do this, He “took part in flesh and blood” 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). In His atoning death and triumphant resurrection He secured the solution of every problem arising out of the presence of sin in God’s universe, He laid low the power of Satan, and broke for ever the power of death and the grave; and in His ascension as a living man to the right hand of God made a public show of the evil principalities and powers of the unseen world, triumphing over them in Himself.

Paul’s Witness

But if we see the overcomer in perfection in the man Christ Jesus, the passages from John’s first epistle and the book of Revelation show that it is gloriously possible for every believer, in measure, to be an overcomer. Paul the apostle is sometimes spoken of (and with some justification) as the pattern Christian. Hear him as he approaches the end of his pathway of witness and service. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Surely these are the words of an overcomer! We might look at the perfect example of the overcomer in our blessed Lord, but be tempted to think “He was the perfect, sinless, holy man, whereas I am weak and failing and have the sinful flesh within me.” But Paul the apostle

was a man of like passions with ourselves, and he also had the flesh within him, no less than we, and what was possible for him is possible for us. What we need is his purpose of heart and singleness of eye — “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.”

John's Epistle

John the apostle writes to the family of God — the fathers, the young men, and the babes. The characteristics of the young men are that they are strong and have overcome the wicked one, and he leaves us in no doubt as to why this is so, for he says of them, “The word of God abideth in you.” The same weapon, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, with which the man Christ Jesus defeated the enemy is available and is efficacious in the hands of all who feed upon it and are subject to it. Again, what an encouragement to make the Word of God our daily spiritual food! But is it not significant that it is apparently to the young men in particular, that the solemn warning is addressed, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2: 14-16). There is that within each one of us which answers to the appeal of the world, and only the Word of God dwelling in power in our hearts and applied by the Holy Spirit can

enable us to detect and refuse the subtle principles which still animate this present evil world in all its forms and phases, religious or otherwise.

In chapter 5 we find two things which characterise him who overcomes the world. First, he is “born of God.” Obviously this is God's side of the matter. Only that life which is of God and from God can be victorious over the world. The second thing is faith, which on our side is an absolute necessity. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (verse 1), and “Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (verses 4 and 5). Every believer is the subject of God's sovereign work by the Holy Spirit in new birth, and along with this goes the faith that Jesus (the despised, rejected, and crucified of men) is the Son of God.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews brings before us in chapter 11 the distinguished company of the “heroes of faith,” as they are often called, of the Old Testament. They believed God's promises, having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, embraced them, became pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and eventually died in faith, still not having received the fulfilment of the promises. In their day and generation all those whose names are mentioned (and great numbers whose names are not mentioned) were overcomers, in the power of faith.

The Seven Churches

The most frequent references to the overcomer are to be found in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation. To speak in detail of the addresses to the seven churches would be beyond the scope of a brief paper, but one or two salient points might be considered. It has long been recognised that while the Lord through John addressed seven existing assemblies in Asia, each in the spiritual condition described by Him, these letters also set forth prophetically the history of the professing Church in responsibility from the beginning of the dispensation to the rapture. In the last four addresses the coming of the Lord is referred to, and it is clear, therefore, that the spiritual conditions represented by Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea respectively, subsist side by side until the end. In each of the seven letters the Lord holds out a promise to "him that overcometh." In five of the letters the Lord, whose eyes are as a flame of fire (Rev. 1: 14) while giving His approbation to all that is of Himself, exposes also that which, in the church in question, is contrary to His mind and will; and in each case the overcomer is he who, in this state of things, makes way against the tide of evil, and thus earns His Lord's approval and special blessing. There was much that He praised in Ephesus, that assembly so favoured in receiving, through Paul, the highest truths of the Christian revelation. He saw their works, their labour, their patience, their intolerance of evil men, their detection of false apostles. The searching eyes of the Lord also exposed in Ephesus the root of all subsequent corruption

and declension — the loss of first love, and the assembly was exhorted by Him to "Remember therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." The overcomer in Ephesus was doubtless he who heeded this word and responded to it.

Although the general state of the Church as seen in Ephesus eventually merged into that represented by Smyrna (a period of fierce persecutions and martyrdom for many Christians) yet surely the Lord's message to Ephesus should challenge the heart of every believer in this late stage of the Church's earthly history. Is there with us the loss of first love? Perhaps we may be as active in service as ever, preaching, ministering, teaching, visiting the sick, with much outward appearance of devotion. But as the eyes that are as a flame of fire penetrate our inmost being, is the inner motive of our activity seen to be the constraining love of Christ? Well might we pray, as did the Psalmist, "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" (Ps. 139: 23, 24).

Passing over Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis, let us consider Philadelphia a little. After the coldness of spiritual death in Sardis, here, surely is the warmth of revival. Philadelphia characteristically had kept the Lord's word and had not denied His name, and had also kept the word of His patience. Not a single word of reproach or faultfinding came from the Lord to this assembly.

Yet in this case also He refers to the overcomer and holds out His wonderful promises. But what could there be to overcome in conditions which He surveyed with such pleasure? The clue is to be found in His general exhortation in verse 11 — “hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” **Hold fast!** Overcoming in Philadelphia conditions consists in retaining and maintaining the moral features which the Lord commended in Philadelphia, personal faithfulness and devotion to the Lord’s Name and the Lord’s Word (with all that this involves), and living in constant expectation of His coming.

The progress of declension which began in Ephesus in the loss of first love, finds its ultimate issue in Laodicea. This church retains the Name of Christ, but little else. There is a great deal of self-complacency, self-satisfaction, and self-sufficiency, but Christ as a Person is unknown, unwanted, and outside the door. In matchless grace He knocks at the doors of individual hearts. “If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” In the atmosphere of lukewarmness and indifference to Christ so nauseating to our Lord, the overcomer surely is he who responds to this gracious invitation. If the door is opened to Him, He will come in, first as the honoured Guest, and will sup with us, entering into and being our Companion in our daily circumstances. But in

all things “He must have the pre-eminence,” and by the very nature of things, because of who He is, the Guest becomes the Host, and we know what it is to sup with Him. He leads us, in His blessed company, into His circumstances, that eternal sphere of love, life, light, and relationship in which He dwells.

Peter’s Last Word

We end where we began — every believer is called upon to be an overcomer. But we can only overcome in the power of the divine resources which are freely and abundantly available to us. The testimony of the apostle Peter in this respect is most encouraging. In his last words before “putting off his tabernacle” he says, “according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us by glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1, 3-4).

With divine resources the feeblest believer can be an overcomer; without divine resources, and relying on the arm of flesh, the strongest believer confronted with the power of Satan, the world, and the flesh will fare no better than did Peter himself, when he denied his Lord with oaths and curses.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Progress of Truth in the Epistles

In the epistles, the believer is often linked with Christ by the inspired use of verbs which in a special way join him with Christ in the action indicated. Galations 2: 20 is an example, "I am crucified with Christ." The words in English "crucified with" are a single verb in the original, and could be represented by "co-crucified." The complete list of actions thus described (we do not forget that the ground whereon we stand is holy), is as follows: crucified, dead, buried, quickened, raised, seated. A great deal of light on the progress of teaching on this central theme is given when it is noted that the epistles are linked up in a series by the occurrences of these "joint" verbs. A field for a lifetime's meditation and growth of soul is here provided.

Galations	Romans	Colossians	Ephesians
Crucified	Crucified		
	Dead	Dead	
	Buried	Buried	
		Quickened	Quickened
		Raised	Raised
			Seated

Filled with the Spirit

A concordance of this pregnant expression would read as follows:

Ex.	31: 3.	Bezaleel
	35: 31.	Bezaleel
Luke	1: 15.	John Baptist
	1: 41.	Elisabeth
	1: 67.	Zacharias
Acts	2: 4.	Disciples
	4: 8.	Peter
	4: 31.	Disciples
	13: 9.	Paul
Eph.	5: 18.	

Out of 10 references in total, there are 2 in the Old Testament, 7 in the writings of Luke, and 1 in the rest of the New Testament. Its meaning in Ephesians 5: 18 seems settled by the fact that its meaning elsewhere is a Filling at a particular time and for a particular purpose.

The related phrase, "full of the Spirit" occurs as follows:

Luke	4: 1.	Jesus
Acts	6: 3.	7 men
	6: 5.	Stephen
	7: 55.	Stephen
	11: 24.	Barnabas

Colossians 2: 3

In one version, the words "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid" are marked as a quotation. This could only be from Proverbs 2: 2-4, which reads, "So shalt thou incline thine ear unto **wisdom** . . . Yea, if thou criest after **knowledge** . . . and searchest for her as for **hid treasure**." The zeal of the philosopher's quest is worthy of this, but it is revealed, and available by the Spirit. Where the treasure is, there will the thieves and robbers be (v. 8).

THE TRUE WORSHIP

J. S. BLACKBURN.

3. THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

BOTH the systems of priesthood and sacrifice which the Bible calls worship are made to depend on a High Priest. The continuance among the people of the tabernacle and its worship hung on the high priest's action on the Day of Atonement. In the true worship introduced in Hebrews 10: 19-22 we have the boldness to enter into the holiest because we have a High Priest and because of what He has done. In neither case could the worship begin or continue without the existence and work of the High Priest. Christ's presence there in the heavenly sanctuary is the "nail in a sure place", "the anchor within the veil", on which the true worship depends.

In this chapter, therefore, we enter on the privilege and joy of **considering** our great High Priest. "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, **consider** the. . . High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 3: 1) The same call comes also at the end of the epistle, "**Consider Him**" (Hebrews 12: 3). Indeed it is in this epistle exclusively that the truth of the Priesthood of Christ is expounded. (In this chapter references are to Hebrews unless otherwise stated). The epistle leads on step by step until we arrive in 10: 22 at the call to the true worship which is the result in action of the great range of truth concerning our High Priest set out in the **body** of the epistle. The same note is touch-

ed again in the closing words. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (13: 10). "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (13: 15).

It is easy to see why this subject should form the substance of a letter addressed to Hebrew Christians of the earliest times. They were evidently labouring under the reproach that in becoming Christians they would lose everything. In Christianity (so their opponents said), there was no sanctuary, no altar, no sacrifice, and above all, no priest. The purpose of the epistle is to assure these Hebrew Christians that we **do** possess a great High Priest (4: 14). We **do** possess an altar (13: 10).

A similar reproach is brought by the modern devotees of a ritualistic worship. A visitor travelled forty miles to see a Waldensian pastor in Italy to hear more about "the religion" which the pastor preached over the radio. After some conversation, they visited his simple church together.

"But what is it you worship?" said the visitor, looking round in surprise, "no candles, no sanctuary, no altar, no Christ. Ah, I see what you worship" (pointing to the large Bible), "you worship the Book."

The pastor mildly disclaimed this suggestion, but presented him with a Bible. Some time afterwards, the pastor was leaving Italy for England, and the day before he left, the same visitor arrived again.

“ I heard you were going to England,” he said, “ and I thought I must come and say goodbye, and thank you for the Book — for it has taught me that it is not the Book you worship, but the Man in the Book.”

The particular importance of the truth of the priesthood of Christ to those who have been the devotees of a ritualistic worship is clear; but is this truth equally important for other Gentile Christians? They never had an earthly sanctuary and a God-appointed high priest and could not therefore lose these favours. If we reflect on the needs to be met by this truth, however, we shall see how much we Gentile believers need the service of our High Priest. The two great purposes of the service of Christ as High Priest are to help our **weaknesses** (succour in 2: 18 and infirmities in 4: 15) and to sustain our **worship**. So long as we continue with this need, standing related to this privilege, we shall continue to stand greatly in need of priestly service.

So long as we **possess** a High Priest, why do we need to know about it? Co-operative action in any matter is only possible if there is understanding. In face of the problem of a broken-down car, action is required; but it would be of small use to blow the horn or switch on the lights. Action, to be

effective and useful, must co-operate with the true principle of action of the mechanism, and this depends on knowledge and understanding. The epistle to the Hebrews is to give us understanding as to the present service of our High Priest, so that by co-operative action we may enter into the fulness of the blessing and privilege available in Him. Indeed, we must face the fact that understanding the Priesthood of Christ belongs to Christian maturity. It is strong meat for those of full age, as well as milk for the babes in Christ. There is nothing here to divert a Christian who is a babe in Christ from making a beginning in the understanding of Christ's priesthood, but the majority of the persons reading these lines will have been on the Christian pathway for several years, and it is a serious reflection that insofar as we feel reluctance to enter and advance and grow in this truth, we come under the lament of 5: 11 to 6: 1. Are we dull of hearing when for the time we have been on the way we ought to be teachers? Then one of the great calls which reaches us from this epistle is: “ Let us go on to maturity . . . shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end . . . that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

The predominant picture of Christ presented in Hebrews sees Him **seated in heaven**. This thought springs first from Psalm 110: 1. “ The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” It is joined with Psalm 2: 7 to form the twin pillars on which the teaching of the epistle is built. The one at-

tests Christ's deity and sonship: the other the place of His present priestly service. Then, by a mixture of likeness and contrast, the statement of Psalm 110: 1 is fused and blended with the actions and positions of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, to produce the picture of Christ, our great High Priest, probably wearing His garments of glory and beauty, seated in the heavenly sanctuary during the great arch of time which bridges the period which separates His first coming for sacrifice from His second coming for salvation. This is the splendid view in mind when the writer calls us, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling to **consider Him**.

Since so much depends on the ritual of the great Day of Atonement, some careful attention must be given to this, as described in Leviticus 16. Although certain important actions are repeated, we shall consider at the moment only Leviticus 16: 11-14 and 20-22. Aaron was first to slay the sin offering; then, for the only occasion in Israel's year, to lift the veil and enter into the Holiest. His first action there was to put sweet incense on coals of fire from the altar, thus filling the sanctuary with a cloud of incense, "that he die not". He was then to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering on and before the mercy-seat on the ark, thus making a propitiation before God for his own sins and later for those of the people, and indeed for the sanctuary itself. When these sacrificial actions were finished, Aaron came out, confessed the sins of the people over the head of a live goat, which then bore them away into a land of forgetfulness.

The meaning of all this is not less broad, long, deep, and high, not less instinct with the love that never faileth, because it is plain and clear as interpreted in Hebrews 9 and 10. At His first coming, the blessed Christ offered Himself without spot to God. After His resurrection and at the moment of His ascension, He entered into the heavenly sanctuary in the power and blessing of the blood of His sacrifice, and He is about to appear a second time. His earthly people Israel will then look on Him whom they pierced, confess their sins in the language of Isaiah 53, and their transgressions will be forgiven and remembered no more.

The Spirit of God in Hebrews seizes on this moment, when Christ our great High Priest is inside the sanctuary of heaven, points out the contrasts with the shadows of Leviticus 16, and fixes our gaze upon Him, seated because the work of sacrifice is finished once for all. Probably also they have had a right instinct who have thought and taught of Him there, in another contrast with the shadows of the law, wearing His garments of glory and beauty.

"He sits in heaven, their great High Priest,
And bears their names upon His breast."

It is this view of Christ, let us repeat, which the writer has in mind in concluding: "having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near" as holy worshippers; and thus we consider Him now.

The essential and characteristic garment of the high priest when he was wearing the garments of glory

and beauty, was a kind of waistcoat called the ephod. Inseparably attached to this were the shoulder stones and breastplate on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel, and also the Urim and Thummim. In the description of the garments of glory and beauty in Exodus 28, the ephod occupies 25 out of 34 verses. In its construction threads of two kinds were intricately interwoven. One kind consisted of threads of metallic gold, and the other of ordinary spun threads of blue, purple, scarlet, and shining white. "They did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into threads, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet and in the byssus with cunning work" (Exodus 39: 3).

In the language of the typical teaching of Scripture, the ephod seemed to be saying that only when He shall come, in whom the pure gold of fulness of deity has taken in one Person the lovely colours of perfect manhood, will the people of God have the real Priest of God's thought. It is in fulfilment of this type that these two themes form the subjects of the opening chapters of Hebrews. Chapter 1 presents the Divine Son, and Chapter 2 Him who was made in all things like the men who are His brethren, sin apart. Upon the foundation formed by these two great truths is built the structure supporting the true worship, and indeed the fabric of Christianity itself.

Special attention is drawn to 1: 8: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." This verse unquestionably teaches a Sonship in deity for ever and ever.

It is sometimes said that the words "Eternal Son" do not occur in Scripture, in order to question the truth they contain. This is mere slavery to words. A Divine Sonship is a Sonship which belongs to Christ's deity: a Sonship which belongs to deity means a Sonship pre-existent before the Incarnation, and is thus exactly equivalent to an eternal Sonship. Hebrews 1 proclaims the Divine Sonship of Christ, and this is the gold of the ephod.

In Hebrews 2 we learn that this same Person, by inheritance so much above angels, was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. He entered that rank in the scale of being which belongs to man; and being without sin was such a Man that it was suitable for "all wreaths of empire" to meet on Him. Thus into the background formed by the shining white of His spotless manhood, are worked the blue and the purple and the scarlet, as well as the gold.

That part of Christ's present priestly service which is first considered in this epistle follows immediately on this truth of His Person. It is evident that among the taunts made against the Hebrew Christians was the suggestion that if it were true that so exalted a Person was their priest, then He was too high, too remote, to sympathise with their weakness. This accounts for the negative form in which we are assured of His help. It is not true that our High Priest "cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (4: 15). Since He is both God and man; since He has reached in God's

throne and in the suffering of death the extremes of power and of love, what miracles of sympathy, help, and comfort can be beyond our expectation from such a Priest? What can be achieved by paraphrase in the realm of Bible translation is exemplified in this verse. The straightforward translation would be "sympathise with our weaknesses". With how perfect a tact is this translated in the Authorised Version: "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Ridout here calls attention to the last words of Mr. Standfast as he was crossing the river of death in a great calm: "Wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too." "To follow His steps" is indeed the life set before us, but here is the succour needed to do it. The Son of God, passing through this world beforehand as His people's Forerunner, has sought out before His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary the footsteps of trial where they would have to tread: weariness, loneliness, hunger, treachery of foes and desertion by friends, lack of understanding and sympathy, apparent failure. There He has put His feet, in order that He may now be able to send help from the sanctuary exactly suited to their need. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (4: 16).

This foundation truth about His Person is also needed for our understanding of the order or principle of succession of His Priesthood. The Aaronic principle of succession was from father to son. On this principle Christ would not be a priest

since He was not descended from Aaron. Nor would His priesthood be such as is needed by many sons on their way to glory. Another priest meets us long before Aaron on the page of Scripture, Melchisedec, of whom we read in Genesis 14. In a book where every man's genealogy, date of birth, and years of life are detailed exactly, the striking thing about Melchisedec is that he appears in the story without descent, without beginning and end of life, and therefore abiding a priest continually. Not until He came, who could really abide a priest continually, was there another priest after his order or succession. Only the Son of God, in resurrection, sitting at God's right hand can be the promised priest after the order of Melchisedec.

The present priestly service of Christ as it concerns the true worship which is our main theme, is reached where we began this chapter, in Hebrews 10: 19-22: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

First, let us note the closing words of this quotation, in which we have the actual exhortation in the now familiar form, "Let us draw near." Those to whom such an invitation can be addressed are described as persons whose hearts are sprinkled

with blood and whose bodies are washed with water. This is obviously figurative language, and takes up the story of Exodus 29, the ritual by which Aaron the high priest, and his sons, the priests, entered on their service. The writer of Hebrews will not name all the brethren priests, because he will not allow any other reference to impair the uniqueness and majesty of Christ's Priesthood; but he is nevertheless designating all the brethren priests just as plainly as the language of Old Testament types can do. By this, therefore, our way is pointed to our next chapter on the priesthood of all believers.

We who in our day read these words are here invited to take up the priestly privilege of worship because we are priests. Nevertheless that supreme privilege is made to depend on our High Priest over God's house, upon His perfect sacrifice, and upon His Person and Presence in the Holiest.

When, in the chapters leading up to the final goal we are now considering, Hebrews describes in detail the earthly sanctuary and the material sacrifices, the two purposes of this imposing system are given. It was intended to serve "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things;" and equally to "signify that the way into the holiest" was not yet revealed. The Holiest of all typifies the presence of God in heaven itself. Mark well the contrast intended in our verse: "Having . . . boldness to enter into the holiest." Every material accompaniment of the idea of approach to God is obliterated at a stroke. All is spiritual. It is the very presence of

God that the true worshippers enter, a sanctuary not made with hands.

Then the dependence of our access upon the one finished sacrifice of Calvary is indicated in the words, "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Hebrews 9 and 10 point the contrast with the sacrifices offered by the priests under the law. They offered many sacrifices, showing by their very repetition that they could never take away sins, and could never, therefore, open up the way into the holiest. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." They **stood**; He sat down; and here is the justification for the expression, the **finished** work of Christ. It is because the finished work of sacrifice is behind Him that He sits down, and that we can enter there.

Such are the truly great themes which occupy us: our great High Priest, and the heavenly sanctuary which is now the place of His service; and because of His finished sacrifice, our privilege of entrance into that most holy place. They are sufficient to engage every power of the renewed mind and heart. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, bring you to maturity in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

“PROFITABLE . . . FOR REPROOF”

A. FORSTER

2 Timothy 3: 16

IF thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault . . .” — “go and reprove him”. These words of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15 give us a thought on the particular aspect of the work of the Word of God we are considering. It is “profitable . . . for telling us our faults.” It goes without saying that we shall **not** profit unless we also avail ourselves of the other uses mentioned in Timothy — “teaching, correction and instruction” (R.V.), but for now let us confine ourselves to this one subject by asking in what way the Bible tells us our faults. If someone says this is introspection, which is a bad thing, the answer must be that not to examine ourselves leads to complacency and this in turn produces a smug self-satisfaction, which is most unhealthy. If another remarks that the subject sounds depressing, let us remember that correct diagnosis is essential before the right remedy can be applied. A further answer to any objections is given by James when he tells his readers that the Word of God is like a mirror, showing us as we really are, and the wise man is the one who takes note of what he sees — whether he likes it or not — and goes away and does something about it (James 1: 23-25).

In passing, let us note the connection between reproof of ourselves — the Word of God acting directly on our own souls — and reproof of others — the work of the Word of God through the preacher (or

writer), laying a responsibility on those who engage in public ministry. This comes out in verse 2 of the following chapter in Timothy, “Preach the word (which is profitable) . . . reprove”. The private reproof comes first, as though in fulfilment of our Lord’s words that we are first to cast out the beam from our own eye, that we may see more clearly to cast out the mote from our brother’s. Past generations of preachers — in Old Testament times and in later centuries — have been noted for their denunciation of sin, and much conviction and heart-searching has been the result. May not the flabby nature of much of our Christianity today be due, at least in part, to the failure of those with the gift of ministry to lovingly, but faithfully, point out the faults of their hearers? As in all other forms of stewardship, the first requirement is faithfulness — not a desire to be appreciated, but to give what is needed.

In seeking to understand the nature of reproof, there is a helpful thought in Hebrews 11: 1. “Faith is the evidence of things not seen,” where the word for “evidence” is usually translated “reproof” or “rebuke,” and can be rendered “proof”. It is certainly as opposed to uncertainty, the truth as opposed to that which is false. This, surely, is the true nature of reproof; to gaze at the perfection of Christ is to be reproofed: the truth is — may we say, automatically — a rebuke to anything which deviates from it. In

this light let us consider the subject in more detail.

It has often been noted that the failings of the Lord's servants are not covered up by the Holy Spirit in His record of their lives. These things are written for our learning that we may profit from their mistakes. They and we are men of like passions with the same physical weaknesses, and the same enemy, and the fact that we have been warned by earlier example makes it all the more serious if we fall into like error. The follies of youth have always been a good and necessary subject to bring to our notice; but we need to remember also that Abraham, Moses and Eli (to name only a few) were old men when they fell into sin and earned reproof. This is something we all need. It is worth noting that God sometimes uses (to us) strange means to carry the reproof. In the case of Abraham it was a heathen king; whilst Eli felt the rebuke of young Samuel's message. How sad a thing it is when the world has legitimate ground for criticizing the conduct of a Christian; who knows what damage is done to the cause? Surely it behoves us to take extra care to walk "circumspectly" ("most exactly") "towards them that are without". Reproved we certainly shall be at times during our lives; let it ever be a family affair! Nor should we despise what those who are much younger than we are can do to help us in this matter.

The only One who could not be convinced ("reproved") of sin was Himself the greatest Revealer of human hearts, and it is in relation to Himself, surely, that He says that

those who do evil hate the Light and will not come to the Light lest their deeds should be reproved. Even men of God of old time saw themselves as they really were only as they came into the light of God's presence; we need only to think of Isaiah's reaction when he "saw the Lord" (Isaiah 6).

In His life on earth our Lord reproofed not only His enemies, but also, what is more to the point in our present meditation, those who were near and dear to Him. There was a gentle reproof for Mary and Joseph after they had sought Him three days sorrowing, "Wist ye not . . . ?" The call of duty to His Father must come before earthly ties, and He emphasised this in a different way later on when His mother and brethren sought to restrain Him (Luke 8: 20, 21). So must we learn that delicate balance between our responsibility to God and to those whom we love. There was a stronger reproof for Peter, as, after a moment of glorious revelation, he sought to turn the Saviour from His path, no doubt with the best of intentions (Matthew 16: 22, 23). How hard for us not to seek to shield those we care for from the possible hazards of the Christian pathway. Human love is a good thing, a God-given gift which He would have us cultivate and express, but, for this very reason, the enemy will try to make us mis-use it. Paul calls attention to the wiles of the devil, and as at the beginning he appeared in disguise, so he still delights to entangle the unwary saint. But being warned we must be on our guard. I have no right to restrain another, out of any consideration whatever, from the line of service to

which God calls him. Sacrifices are an integral part of the Christian pathway and they may be harder to make and to bear when they entail other people, but the reproof of our Lord and Master mentioned above stands as a warning to us.

How gentle is the reproof to Martha, "cumbered with much serving" (Luke 10: 41, 42). Do not some of us need this reminder that Christian service is not measured either by the amount of activity, or even by the visible fruit, but by the depth of our communion and our obedience? This is perhaps a fault of youth rather than of old age, but the enemy will always seek to take advantage of a legitimate zeal for the Lord's things, and by making us attempt too much will either lessen the effectiveness of what is done or cause a breakdown in mind or body which will not be to the glory of God. Martha's mistake seems to have been threefold; first the "cumberance" of serving: "thou art careful — troubled"; the modern word is "worry". If there is one fault about which we need telling more than another nowadays it is surely this question of worry. It has become almost fashionable to worry. If you don't, it is thought to be a sign that you belong to the "couldn't care less" worldly generation by whom we are surrounded. So we worry about those we love, and about ourselves and our service, trying to persuade ourselves and others that we can't help worrying, though the New Testament not only shows us how wrong it is, but also gives us the full answer, "Casting **all** your care upon Him" (1 Peter 5: 7). Second, the neglect of that "good part", sitting at the feet of

the Master. Effective service can never take the place of private devotion and worship. The desert experiences of such men as Moses, John the Baptist and Paul were necessary oases in their lives, and we recall the place that private devotion played in the earthly life of our Lord, and no-one was more active than He. This is something to which we pay lip service, but let us examine ourselves. What do we know of communion with our Lord; have we really chosen the "good part"? Third, Martha was bitter, a little jealous of the position her sister was taking. Here is a subtle thing, against which we must ever be on our guard. How easy for those who are active in the things of the Lord to bemoan in a not too loving way the inactivity of others. Almost as though they are anxious that others, by not rising to the privileges of Christian service were thereby getting away with something and having a better time! Let those who are called to serve (and who is not?) and who realise their call, remember that our Lord Himself came not to be served but to serve, and we are to tread the same pathway. What a reproof was administered in the upper room as the Lord of Glory began to wash His disciples' feet! A lesson, surely, for some of us who are content to let others serve us, just because they have always done so, and seem content to go on doing so. (What about those little jobs about the Hall, left always to the faithful few?)

A constant cause for reproof was the disciples' lack of faith. When the Lord of Creation, asleep in the storm, was awakened by the terri-

fied mariners, He upbraided them "O ye of little faith", and later when Peter, walking on the water, took his eyes off the Lord and began to sink, he was reprov'd with "O thou of little faith". We might be inclined to think Peter had done pretty well to walk as far as he did, but there was apparently no praise for that. Clearly, the Lord **expects** faith in Him and we must guard against congratulating ourselves or others (or being surprised) when it is exercised and God is glorified in one way or another. When the Lord came down from the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples were told they had failed to cast out the evil spirit "because of your unbelief". Most of the failings of the Church generally, and of ourselves individually, can be traced to this one thing, that we have "little faith". Another reproof containing the same words was also given on the sea, but in a different connection (Matthew 16: 8). It seems as though the disciples were concerned about their temporal needs without realizing that these would always be fully met by their Lord. How many times, looking back upon a situation, have we felt the Lord's reproof; surely we could have trusted Him fully to supply all that was necessary without worrying just what was going to happen. It is not enough, even, to be sure the Lord **will** see us through and yet to worry **how** — every detail must quietly be left to Him.

Perhaps the cause of our "little faith" is to be found in other reproofs the Lord administered. On the mount itself Peter made the mistake of failing to differentiate between the Son and the servants,

which the Voice from the excellent glory was quick to correct. We may not be guilty of **this**, but do we really have an understanding of the **Person and Power** of our Saviour? The disciples were again falling into this mistake when they protested at the "waste" of ointment as it was poured on His head (Matthew 26: 6-12). But the woman had an understanding of His Person and of His impending passion, which they had not. Do we think that time spent pouring out our love to the Lord is "wasted"?

As our Lord's personal burdens increased, so the need to reprove His disciples seems to have increased as well, so little did they understand what was happening. How distressed He must have been, first with the desire of James and John for high positions in the Kingdom, and then as the disciples strove together as to who should be the greatest (Mark 10: 35 and Luke 22: 24). The Lord had dealt with this matter once before (Luke 9: 46) but here it was again. Are we free from it today? We **must** be on our guard continually against this basic sin of pride. It has often been pointed out that it is possible even to be proud of being humble.

Another reproof to their way of thinking was given in answer to the disciples' enthusiasm over the wonders of the temple building. Immediately, the Lord, giving no encouragement to this interest in sight-seeing, pointed out the truth that that which is temporal must perish (perhaps sooner than we think) whilst His Word will endure even after worlds themselves have ceased to be (Mark 13, compare

verse 2 with verse 31). The application of this truth in modern times is not difficult to see. How often are we told that we live in a materialistic age; and the temptation to become absorbed by that which is seen and temporal has never been so great. At least one missionary returning to this land after six or seven years' absence has stated plainly and publicly that even after that short time he is very disturbed at the decline in the spiritual health of the Christians he has mixed with here.

In conclusion, let no-one think that the ministry of reproof is an easy or popular task; but it is a rewarding one when done in the love and power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the longest direct reproof in the New Testament is the 1st letter

Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Later on he tells us this was not written without misgivings, but how glad he was when he discovered the effect it had had upon his readers! (2 Cor. 7: 8-12). The aim is to produce "godly sorrow"; not to exalt the reprover or give him any gratification in being able to point out the mistakes of others, but only that it might be in the nature of a necessary pruning to bring forth more fruit. And when we are reprov'd, let us seek grace to accept it, and allow the Potter to remould the clay to His own glory.

Let the Lord Himself have the last word; "As many as I love, I rebuke (reprove) and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent". (Rev. 3: 19).

KINGDOM LOYALTY

F. J. FENNELL.

EVERY heart in the kingdom of God is fully persuaded that "GOD REIGNETH!" They do not look for signs and wonders as confirmation of their faith in Christ. They are entirely subject to, and governed by, the Word of God, Who hath called them to "His Kingdom and Glory." (1 Thess. 2.) They walk, they war, by faith, and not by sight. Thrice happy are such hearts. They seek no repose from the conflict into which the Gospel has introduced them, but rather exult, like the apostle Paul in the King eternal, invisible, the only God, to whom be honour and glory for the ages of the ages. Amen!

During the forty days after His

resurrection, the Lord talked with the apostles of "things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." With hearts filled with the hopes of the godly remnant in Israel, they asked Him, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" He told them that the **when** of the Kingdom was in the Father's power. Times and seasons were not for them. They had in mind the prophetic aspect of the Kingdom of God.

At Pentecost the outpouring of the Spirit brought the apostles into a new power, and a new loyalty. The crucified One was now made of God "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2). Henceforth He was to become the great Administrator of righteous-

ness and peace to believing hearts. We who have confessed Christ as Lord have also come under a new and compelling loyalty. The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given, and we have been brought under the power of a new affection. This has brought us into the Kingdom. "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14: 17). In these things, in a practical way, "we serve Christ, are acceptable to God, and are approved of men." This is the practical aspect of the Kingdom.

Now the question can be raised, **what** is the Kingdom? There are seven names for the Kingdom referred to in the New Testament. They set forth the several characteristics of the **one** Kingdom — the Kingdom of God. Briefly, then, let us gather up a few thoughts on these.

The Kingdom of God

When the Lord was here on earth, in answer to the Pharisees' demand, "when the Kingdom of God should come?," He answered them, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there, for behold the Kingdom of God is within you" — or, as the margin has it, "among you" (Luke 17: 20). The Kingdom of God, then, is moral in character. One has well described it as "the exhibition or manifestation of the ruling power of God under any circumstances." **There** at the time, in the Person of God's beloved Son, He was manifesting His ruling power. **God** was there in Him.

In another context, after His rejection of the Jews, the Lord, in Matthew chapter 12, healed a blind and dumb man, "possessed of a devil." The Jews impute to Him the power of Beelzebub. His words silence them. "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you."

At His threefold temptation Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world. The Lord rebuked him, and quoted the word in Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4: 10).

The conflict between Christ and Satan is resolved in these incidents firstly, by the power of the Spirit of God, and then by the power of the Word of God. The final issue between good and evil, we know, was decided in the mighty conflict at the Cross.

"He Satan's power laid low;
Made sin, sin's reign o'erthrew;
Bow'd to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew."

In the Kingdom the conflict remains for the believer, but the power of the Spirit of God and the power of the Word of God also remain. The call is for a willing obedience to the Word, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit. These two things marked the Lord Himself. By these means **He** overcame.

The call for Kingdom loyalty is found in Romans 6: 12. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness

unto sin; but **yield yourselves unto God**, as those that are alive from the dead (brought out from among dead men), and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The word "instruments" suggests weapons for military use. The apostle triumphantly proceeds, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? Because "death hath no more dominion over Him," the One who died for sin once for all.

The conflict to which the Gospel has introduced us commences within ourselves. It is in the city of Mansoul where the power of the Kingdom is to be learned experimentally.

It is a conflict with the flesh, the world, and Satan. "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6: 11). Herein is the secret of moral and spiritual victory. The conflict is a spiritual warfare, for, says the apostle in 2 Corinthians 10, "We do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The Kingdom of God, then, is marked by moral power. In it God's rule, in the power of the Spirit, and by the Word, holds sway. The territory of the Kingdom of God is found in the redeemed hearts of those who "confess Jesus as Lord."

The Kingdom of Heaven

This is only found in Matthew's

Gospel. It is dispensational, and loyalty to the truth of it is called for. Literally it is the Kingdom of the heavens. To Matthew was given the task of commending the truth to Jewish consciences, proving to them that the Kingdom foretold in Old Testament writings was then and there offered to them, if they would receive it. It meant receiving Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Messiah. They refused both Him and the Kingdom.

Israel, in Deuteronomy, was taught to lay up the Lord's words in their hearts. Their days would be multiplied as "days of heaven upon earth" (Deut. 11: 21). Of David it was written that "his seed should endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." Likewise it is written of the rule or power of the Gentiles, that it should continue till the time that they should know "that the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4: 26).

Hence can be traced through the Old Testament Scriptures allusions to a time when God's will would be "done on earth" (as the prayer which the Lord taught His disciples expressed it), "as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 10). John the Baptist first announced "the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." In chapter 4: 17, Jesus Himself makes the same statement, but instead of His claims being submitted to, they hold a council to destroy Him (Matt. 12: 14). Consequently the Kingdom assumes a secret form (Matt. 13: 11), the mystery (or secret) being that it should be a Kingdom with an absent King, the King being rejected.

The Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of the Heavens are distinct and different aspects of one kingdom. In most points they coincide, both of them having an outward and an inward, a human and (as one may say), a divine form. As to the outward form, the same similitudes are applied to each, "the mustard seed" and "the leaven." As to the inward, we have in the one case the thing formed by the Holy Ghost — the Treasure— and in the other, what the thing formed comes to — the Pearl of great price (Matt. 13). Outwardly then, the Kingdom of the heavens is like a tare-field, a tree, and leaven, a mixture of the Lord's and Satan's people. This mixture, grouped into a wide-spreading system, powerful outwardly, is corrupt internally. Such is Christendom today. But to the faith of the loyal heart there is an inner and divine form which the Kingdom takes. This is seen in the "treasure" — a thing precious to God and to Christ; and in the "pearl," whose oneness and purity remind us of the excellence of the Church, bought at the infinite cost of His precious blood. These then are the marks of the Kingdom of the heavens, from God's side, where the rule of the heavens obtains. Those composing the Church for which Christ "gave Himself" know, even now, "days of heaven upon earth."

The Kingdom of the heavens was thus offered by the Messiah at His advent, and was refused. It then commenced in a mystery, and is running on at the present time. It will exist after the Church's removal from earth to heaven, until the thousand years reign of Christ com-

mences. The Kingdom will then take its proper form, partly as the Kingdom of the Father, and partly as the Kingdom of the Son of man. These both commence and end simultaneously, the one relating to things above, the other to things below, the heavenly and the earthly sides of the kingdom.

The Kingdom of the Father

The Jewish remnant pray, "Our Father, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come." These will be gathered as wheat into the barn, and will be as the righteous, and shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13: 30). A heavenly people, their reward is in heaven, the scene of their Father's dwelling.

The Kingdom of the Son of Man

This view of the Kingdom is earthly, for an earthly people. God delegated His rule to Adam, and gave him dominion over the earth. He failed in his headship through sin. The flood closed the sad story. Psalm 8 looks back to this time, and the apostle quotes this Psalm in Hebrews 2. What Adam lost Christ regains as the second Man out of heaven. He has tasted death for everything, not only for man (Heb. 2: 9).

As Son of Man He executes judgment. As Son of Man He welcomes into His Kingdom the blessed of His Father — the sheep who satisfied His hunger, clothed His nakedness, cheered Him in His sickness, and in imprisonment (Matt. 25: 31-46). An earthly people, they had been counted worthy to "stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21: 36).

Thus the millennial "world Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ" (Rev. 11: 15) has a heavenly and an earthly aspect, the one embracing only glorified saints, the other including the earthly ones having eternal life, but not glorified as to their bodies. The one is the sphere of the Father's glory, the other the scene of the rule of the Son of Man. Both will alike cease when He delivers up "the Kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. 15: 24).

The Kingdom of our Father David

This Kingdom, like the last two we shall refer to, is only mentioned once in the New Testament. Mark 11: 10 describes the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. They that went before and they that followed, we read, cried, "Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord." Here then was David's greater Son. The expression speaks of the Messianic side of the Kingdom, spoken of so much by the prophets, and particularly in the Psalms. The divine choice of a king was David. His Heir was to be born of a virgin, therefore truly Man, yet Immanuel, "God with us." Jerusalem is to be the City of the great King. The Messiah will reign there, His will shall be made known there and published thence throughout the earth. Israel will be gathered again. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion . . . the City of the great King" (Psalm 48: 1-3). The land itself will prosper as never before. "The mountains will bring forth peace, and the little hills, by righteousness" (Psalm 72). "All nations shall call Him blessed: and let the whole earth be

filled with His glory. Amen" (Psalm 72: 19). The Messianic merges into the universal or millennial reign of the Son of Man.

The Kingdom of the Son of His love

Christ has a present Kingdom as the Son of the Father's affections, and into this region of untold blessing we have been translated. We may enjoy it though we cannot describe it, but we can sing:

"Jesus, mighty Son of God wondrous gift on man bestowed;
Many crowns are on Thy head,
glorious First-born from the dead.
Gladly, Lord we bow the knee, by
the Father's just decree,
To His own anointed One; to His
well beloved Son."

The Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ

The everlasting Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is a blessed contrast to the things that are "fading away" around us. These latter two are quite distinct in character from those already mentioned. They give us rather the thought of **position** than of display. The one refers to our **present** place, the other to our **future** glory. They are more to be felt than described.

With a loyalty begotten only of redeeming love, may we be found faithful in the "good fight of faith." And may we not merely have an entrance into the Kingdom (we are sure of this as those elect according to the fore-knowledge of the Father), but may we have an **abundant** entrance. Amen!

CORRESPONDENCE

We give below the substance of an enquiry received from W. L., Workington, Cumberland:

1. I understand the title Apostle comes from the Greek word *apostolos*. Does this word mean "one sent forth"?
2. Do the following Scriptures indicate that others, apart from the Twelve, were entitled apostles?
 Romans 16: 17: Andronicus and Junia, "of note among the apostles".
 1 Corinthians 9: 5, 6: We (Paul and Barnabas) "as well as other apostles".
 Ephesians 5: 11: Christ, after His ascension, gave some apostles.
 1 Thessalonians 1: 1, 2, 6: We (Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus) "as the apostles of Christ".
 Acts 14: 14: "... the apostles, Barnabas and Paul".
3. Could the seventy in Luke 10: 1 be called apostles, seeing they were sent forth?
4. I understand that the Greek Orthodox Church intends to include its Patriarchs among the Twelve, by giving them the name apostles.

The questions are considered as numbered above:

1. The word *apostolos* means "one who is sent". In the majority of cases it applies to the Twelve or to Paul.

2. Three out of the five Scriptures quoted are inconclusive; but from Ephesians 4: 11 it is certain that after His ascension He gave for the Church as gifts, men who were to be apostles in a new way. Of these, of course, the great example is Paul himself. The only other to be named is Barnabas, in Acts 14: 14.

3. The seventy cannot be called apostles in the sense that they had been appointed to a continuing

Office, to which the Lord attached His personal authority.

4. We can find no evidence that either the Greek or the Roman Church applies the title Apostle intending by this to include the persons so named with the twelve. These Churches mean by the term "apostolic" that the Apostles founded these Churches and their Christ-given authority continues in them. This is their claim. It is **not** upheld by Scripture.

The present enquiry is important because in 1 John 4: 6 and 1 Corinthians 14: 37 the test of truth in doctrine and practice is obedience to the apostolic message contained in the Bible.

4. THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

IN the whole range of Christian faith and practice, there is no point at which greater confusion exists than on the subject of the priesthood of all believers. We cannot escape at this point from attempting to unravel some of the threads, in order to free the Scripture Truth from these entanglements, and to exhibit it so that all may see who will.

Since, as we have seen, the New Testament worship at every point follows the pattern of the Old, we must return first to the Old Testament to obtain a basic outline. Leviticus was the priest's book, and there the facts can readily be seen. The priests were such by birth. From Exodus 19: 6 we learn that God's original intention was that all His people should be priests, but from 28: 1 that Aaron and his sons were set apart for the priest's office. The high priest was personally chosen and named by God. All others were priests by being his descendants.

The priest's privilege was the whole service of the sanctuary, but in particular all that had to be done to present to God the sacrifices after they had been brought and killed by the offerer. Thus their lives were passed in nearness to God, and in presenting to Him what was pleasing in His sight. Portions of the animals sacrificed were allocated to the priests for food, and they were thus sustained for their service by what God named "My offering, and My bread for My sacrifice". They shared with Jehovah their God the

food of His table.

The two key texts in the New Testament are short enough to be quoted in full. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10: 22). "To whom coming, . . . Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an *holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. . .*" (1 Peter 2: 5).

Some of the meaning of these Scriptures will be made clear if two questions are now stated:

1. What is a priest's true work?
2. How do people become priests?

1. The function of the priests for the true worship is stated in the passage last quoted. It is to offer sacrifices. Their work as priests is not prayer, nor sympathy, nor intercession; it is not primarily presenting their bodies, though all these things priests will do. The New Testament priesthood is "to offer up . . . sacrifices," and no other Scripture takes away from the simple force of this one.

A good deal of confusion stems from the history of the word priest in English, as well as in other modern languages. The three ancient orders had scriptural names, *episkopos*, *presbuteros*, and *diakonos*, but used in a decidedly non-scriptural way. These titles passed with little change into English as

bishops, presbyters and deacons, and presbyter became further simplified, perhaps through prester, to priest. By derivation therefore, it means presbyter or elder. By the time the Bible came to be translated into English, the idea had arisen that Christian presbyters had a sacrifice to offer. Thus the word priest was employed for those who offered sacrifices in the Old Testament. When our evangelical brethren in the episcopal churches maintain that priest simply means elder, they are historically right, but wrong scripturally. The ritualists are perfectly right scripturally when they use the name to signify a person qualified to offer sacrifice. The sad thing in either case is that through this history, in the English Bible the ministry of oversight and government is thus confused with the ministry of the sanctuary and of sacrifice. In the New Testament the priesthood is absolutely distinct from the overseeing ministry, and its purpose is sacrifice.

The offerings of New Testament priests are **not**, however, material sacrifices, and here, of course, is the essential point at which we must part company with the tenets of all ritualistic worship. The dreadful error of the mass is that in it there purports to be a repetition of the sacrifice of our Saviour on the cross. The truth is that His sacrifice is unique. It can never be repeated, for by "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever (and) sat down on the right hand of God."

Here we must give special attention to the repetition in I Peter 2: 5 of the word "spiritual". It is a spiritual house, and the priests offer spiritual sacrifices. These are facts in the spiritual and unseen world, and **not** in the material and visible realm. In Israel there was a house

of God made with hands, and material sacrifices consisting of animals, meal, oil, and wine, and ritualistic religion is an outdated imitation in these respects. In the true worship, the house of God is not made with hands. It is a spiritual house. In the true worship, the sacrifices are not of the material order. They are spiritual sacrifices. In what these spiritual sacrifices consist is a question lying very near the heart of our subject, and it will occupy our attention in a later chapter. Can it be believed in spite of all this, that the material garments of beauty worn by Israel's priests are to be matched by material garments of beauty for the true worship? Or that the other sensible accompaniments of the Old Testament worship (incense, music, attention to bodily posture in relation to a material sanctuary), are to be matched by sensible, material equivalents in the true worship? Let us note with humility, reverence, and obedience that in these Scriptures the Spirit of God has made a clean sweep of everything sensible and material and made with hands, and has unmistakably located these conditions and actions in the spiritual realm, in the inner, unseen part of our being, the spirit, where we can approach and hold converse with the God who is a Spirit. In Hebrews 6: 1, 2 material washings and sacrificial details belong to the childhood stage of God's people, and the call is to leave them and proceed to full growth, which the writer connects with a true understanding of priesthood.

2. In an earlier chapter we made an approach to the subject of the priesthood of all believers by noticing in Hebrews 10: 19-22 that those who now have the privilege, withheld from the sons of Aaron, of entrance into the holiest, are those who have passed through an initia-

tory experience described in terms of the cleansing of the priests prescribed in Exodus 29. All question is removed by 1 Peter 2: 2-5. Here all that we have noted about the Old Testament priests is brought to bear on all believers. "Ye are . . . a holy priesthood". The new priests are also to be priests by birth, the new birth. "Being born again . . . by the word of God (1: 23). "As new-born babes" (2: 2). That this refers to original conversion, is confirmed immediately; "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, . . . ye . . . are a holy priesthood" (2: 3-5). Everyone who has been born again, who has come to Christ, is a member of the only true New Testament priesthood.

The initiatory rites of Exodus 29 included, prior to investment with the garments of priesthood, a double cleansing, first by blood, and then by water. The spiritual experience corresponding to this lies behind the entrance into priesthood of every believer in the Lord Jesus. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7). This is our first cleansing; and His words teach His disciples also how they were cleansed by water: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," and "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 15: 3, 13: 10). Thus our double cleansing is by the precious blood of Christ, and by the Word of God.

Still in detailed accord with the type, the Lord also describes in John 13: 10 an often-to-be repeated washing, in contrast to the once-for-all washing at conversion, and which was needed to remove the daily defilements of the way. In such picture-language we are reminded of the spiritual exercises by means of

which the Lord maintains His people in that sanctification without which they would not be in a condition to engage in their priestly privilege. Thus, in the Christian priesthood of all believers there is what corresponds both to the once-for-all washing of the priests at their consecration, and the daily washing at the laver as they approached the sanctuary (Exodus 30: 18-20).

The practical significance of these truths is brought out most clearly if we use them to test faith and action. We have seen that **everyone** who, in Bible language, has been re-born, and has passed in through the door of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, forms part of this holy priesthood. It is perfectly clear, on the contrary, that **no-one** who has not been the subject of these cleansing acts of God in Christ has any part or lot in the true worship. The contrary notion that **anyone** can and should be taught to worship is not confined to the B.B.C. The following quotation is taken from a journal, sound, edifying and vigorous on general evangelical truth, where it appears without correction. "A serious objection is raised by those who point out that many of the children whom we lead in worship are in fact unregenerate; how can they praise God? Here, we must remember that the whole earth is called upon to praise God, and our children are surely included in this. Indeed, our Lord showed an especial love and concern for children."* At the most sympathetic estimate, this remark represents such a dilution of the meaning of the word 'worship' as to render it practically useless. In the light of Scripture, the unregenerate child is simply incapable of the

*Paper reported in "The Christian Graduate", June 1959, p. 74.

true worship. He has no life in the Spirit, and has nothing to bring which is acceptable to God, although it is so wonderfully true that he is an object of the love of God. If the worship being taught him is not the true worship, then it should not be taught. Our Christian service towards the children, therefore, is not to teach them to worship, but to show them the way of life through the love of God, so that through repentance and faith they may become children of God. Then, please God, but not till then, they will be capable of becoming, as did the Samaritan woman, spiritual worshippers.

On the other hand, practically the whole of Christendom is permeated with practices which imply that a separate ministerial class, analogous to the priesthood in Israel has privileges and functions, distinct from, and superior to, the usually admitted priesthood of all believers. This becomes explicit in the episcopal churches with a separate class named priests.

Having so far sketched the answers given by Scripture to the two questions enumerated, it is at this point of the greatest importance to state and face the question, a fundamental one, underlying all that has been said. Over what area of faith and practice are Christians to act in obedience to the authority of Scripture?

A recent powerful statement on the authority of Scripture emanating from the evangelical section of the Anglican Church reads as follows:

"The teaching of the written Scriptures is the Word which God spoke and speaks to His Church, and is finally authoritative for life and faith. . . . It contains all that the Church needs to know in this world for its guidance in the way of salvation and service. . . . Further-

more, the Holy Spirit, who caused it to be written, has been given to the Church to cause believers to recognize it for the divine Word that it is, and to enable them to interpret it rightly and understand its meaning. . . . The Bible, therefore, does not need to be supplemented and interpreted by tradition. . . . Instead, it demands to sit in judgment . . . the words of men must be tried by the Word of God."*

This is a faultless statement of our faith relative to the authority of Holy Scripture, and would be subscribed by all evangelical Christians in whatever communion. Let this admirable statement be compared, however, with another utterance of evangelicals, the findings of the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen in September 1962. There is a fine affirmation that forms of priestly sacrifice, other than Christ's one sacrifice for sin, are now spiritual and are to be offered in Christ equally by all His people. Later, we meet the following: we value "for ourselves the historic episcopate as a form of Church order of proved worth, and . . . regard it as un-Anglican to press it on others".

There is here not even a claim that the historic episcopate is scriptural. Its virtue is that it is of "proved worth", and the criterion is what is "un-Anglican": and by this statement, office in the Church (in ways which in practice impinge on worship) is put outside the realm where we obey the Word of God without its needing to be "supplemented by and interpreted by tradition". I know very well that it will be answered that the Bible does not give a complete system of Church government. Be it so, but

*Fundamentalism and the Word of God, J. I. Packer, pp. 47, 48.

this is a poor reason for not even attempting to act on what it does give.

In the almighty providence of God, the Reformers were His instruments for uncovering the truth, overlaid during centuries of darkness, that the Bible is the sole authority for the way of salvation through justification by faith alone. They did **not** (not even Calvin), proceed to an entire reliance on the Word of God, even so far as it goes, for what concerns worship and the Church. In that same providence, this latter part of the great work of recovery was reserved for A. N. Groves and J. N. Darby. The folk whose simple service was described in the Prologue were in fact attempting this great act of faith. They go all the way with our beloved brethren of the evangelical communions on the

authority of the Word of God, but their **distinctive** position and witness is that they go this great step beyond. They are cutting adrift from centuries of tradition, and extending the principle of acting on the Word of God as sole authority and guide in worship and in the Church, as well as for evangelical truth. They not only believe, but also act on the Bible truth of the spiritual priesthood of all believers. The only priority here is that which can be given by lives lived in the love of God and by growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy” (Psalm 43: 3, 4).

High Mountains

IT was from a very high mountain that Ezekiel saw his vision of the future Temple, the House, yet to be rebuilt. He saw the glory of the LORD fill the House, and fell upon his face in worship (Ezekiel 40: 2). From an exceeding high mountain the Lord, in His temptation, saw the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, in their true light (Matthew 4: 8). The three favoured disciples saw their vision of the transfigured Son of Man coming in His kingdom on an high mountain apart. In contrast with His position in the wilderness where he was taken to get a true view of the Scarlet Woman, it was from a great and high mountain that John saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (Revelation 21: 10).

FROM HEAVEN

G. DAVISON

(Acts 2: 2, 9: 3, II: 5)

WHEN the apostle Peter wrote his first epistle to those Jews who had embraced the faith of Christianity in accepting Jesus as the Christ, he was led by the Spirit of God to emphasise the essentially heavenly character of the faith they had believed, for Christianity is a heavenly system in origin, character, and destiny. He first assures them that the truths which they had believed had been made known unto them, "by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Pet. 1: 12). Before believing the gospel their hopes had been centred in Zion, the temple, and the land under the beneficent sway of their long promised Messiah. They now believed that Jesus was their Messiah though the nation had rejected Him as such, and the apostle goes on to inform them that though He is rejected on earth, He is now in heaven. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Pet. 3: 22). He also assures them that consequent upon their having believed the gospel their hope was not now to be centred in Zion on earth, for they had been called "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1: 4).

The three references at the head of this paper all contain the phrase "from heaven" and in combination shew that the Christian company is a heavenly organism. Luke in his gospel was inspired to write an account of the beginnings of these

things and send it to the most noble Theophilus to assure him of "those things which are most surely believed among us". He later wrote the book of the Acts to the same person to enlighten him further concerning "all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1: 1). All that our Lord began to do and teach when on earth is now being continued from heaven, and from there, light is now shining in this world to enlighten men for blessing. We do well to keep in mind that this blessing has reached us from heaven, however important it is to remember it began on earth.

Our first reference in the book of the Acts is to the descent of the Holy Spirit into this world, coming from an ascended Christ. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." It is important for us ever to keep in mind that the real true uniting force which has bound together the church as a living organism is the Holy Spirit of God Who came down from heaven with this object in view. The Spirit did not come from any earthly religious centre, but "from heaven." Heaven then is the point of control for the Church of God. Can we doubt that if the Spirit came from heaven it was with a view to attaching us to Christ Who is in heaven and so accomplish through the Church the desire of heaven for the blessing of mankind?

Though not seen as our Lord had been, the coming of the Spirit is described as "a sound from heaven as

of a rushing mighty wind." He was a moving, powerful, unseen force, yet withal indicating that He was here, in demonstrating His power and control of that company, witnessed by the wonderful effects which took place on that Pentecostal day. It is not in mind to trace out the wonders recorded in this chapter, but rather to emphasise that the Person Who gave power for it all came "**from heaven.**" Another matter worthy of note in this verse is, "it **filled** all the house where they were sitting." How this ought to assure us that the Holy Spirit has every resource for every servant on every occasion which has for its objective the advancement of the interests of heaven. May we never depend upon any other power in our service for our Lord.

Our second reference stands related to Saul of Tarsus. "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light **from heaven.**" This time it is Jesus from Whom that light shone, and while causing temporary blindness to the physical eyes of Saul of Tarsus we may venture to say it shone through spiritual eyes into his darkened heart. This paragon of the law, this intolerant religious bigot discovered himself to be "the chief of sinners" as the result of that light shining in. May we not rightly conclude that at that moment Saul of Tarsus died and Paul the apostle was born? What else but this light from heaven could have effected such a great transformation? Writing of this at a later date we hear him saying, "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" (2 Cor. 4: 6). From the moment that light shone into his heart he be-

came the willing bonds slave of our Lord Jesus Christ. No earthly power, nor law of Sinai, could have produced such a wonderful change, for it virtually turned a wolf into a shepherd. Such is the character and power of that light "from heaven".

In our third reference Peter is giving an account to the apostles at Jerusalem to explain why he took the journey to Caesarea to hold a gospel meeting in the house of a Gentile centurion. "I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down **from heaven** by four corners: and it came even to me." He carefully emphasised that this vision was "from heaven" lest the others might think he had presumed to do this thing of himself. We apprehend this time that the vision was given by God. Following the conversion of Saul of Tarsus as a necessary preliminary to the gospel going out to the Gentiles, Peter, to whom had been given the keys of the kingdom, acting under the control of this vision from heaven is led to be the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles in this public way. We can be assured by the words which he addressed to Cornelius that only a light and a command from heaven would ever have induced him to be found in such circumstances (Acts 10: 28). Nor would the apostles have been satisfied without this explanation; but who would gainsay this command of God given in such a striking way? To every right-minded saint, the commands of heaven must be obeyed.

We note that all three of these heavenly movements are gathered together in this explanation which Peter was led to give. It was the Holy Spirit Who came down as that sound "from heaven". It was the Lord Jesus Christ Who shone upon

Saul of Tarsus that light "from heaven". It was God Who gave to Peter the vision of that sheet "from heaven". So in this discourse Peter recounts that as he was speaking, "the Holy Ghost fell on them." Along with this they "believed on the Lord Jesus Christ". And he concludes by assuring them "Then

hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11: 15-18).

Let us ever thank God for these heavenly things which assure us that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all interested and active in bringing blessing to both Jews and Gentiles today.

THE FIELDS OF BOAZ

D. W. PATERSON

THE book of Ruth is set in a dark day. In chapter 1, verse 1, we read it was in the days when the judges ruled, days of civil and religious anarchy, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. In addition there was a famine in the land, and that where one would least expect it, for Bethlehem is the house of bread. The pressure was too great, and Elimelech went to sojourn in Moab, "he, and his wife and his two sons" — a serious thing for any Israelite to do.

But, beloved, God has such a situation in hand. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Elimelech (whose God is King) died, and after another ten years or so, Mahlon and Chilion died also. Naomi is a widow indeed but the goodness of God leads her to repentance; for she heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. And she arose that she might return from the country of Moab.

The application of all this to Israel is simple enough, and I doubt not that this is the primary teaching of the Book of Ruth. There are, however, certain moral principles plainly seen in the book which are readily

and blessedly applicable to ourselves. To these I would seek to draw attention.

First of all we may notice that a famine — loss of substance — is a serious test to us all. Abraham in these conditions went to Egypt, and got into trouble there. Isaac likewise went to the land of the Philistines. Both represent specific dangers to a heavenly people today. Elimelech went to Moab, which again is not without significance. The Moabites started badly — offspring of Lot. They will also finish badly (Zeph. 2), "a perpetual desolation." In Jeremiah 48 their present moral features are described as "exceeding proud," and again, "at ease from his youth." In Ruth there is this additional feature, death. I doubt not that pride, and ease, and death are permanent dangers for the children of God.

But God, again I say, has such a situation well in hand. He chastens us as well as Israel. Perhaps we might notice in what circumstances Naomi (my pleasantness) changes her name to Mara (bitterness). This is not in Moab, please note, but in Bethlehem. The way of transgressors is hard, not on the outward

journey, but on the return journey. And when one considers that the journey from Moab to Bethlehem, about 35 miles, is almost the same terrain as from Jerusalem to Jericho, where the man in Luke 10 fell among thieves, and moreover that this time it is uphill and not down hill, something of the rigours of the return journey will become more apparent. We also, beloved brethren, like all the city of Bethlehem, may well be moved for these women. They had done well to accomplish such a journey.

We must now enquire who Boaz is. His name means "In Him is strength." A mighty man of wealth in the Hebrew tongue is the same as a mighty man of valour. He is a wonderful picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection power and glory. He is not only "strong and mighty", "mighty in battle." He is also the "King of Glory." He has all power in heaven and upon earth. He is well able to implement the promises of God to Israel. Indeed He is the rich One who for us became poor that we through His poverty may be made rich. He will enrich the whole creation with the blessing of God and, I need hardly say, can enrich us all today.

Then could we especially notice that spiritual feature in Ruth which above all others attracted the notice of Boaz. "Thy people shall be my people," she said, "and thy God, my God." She turned her back on the gods of Moab, and a full reward was to be given her of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings she was come to trust. Affection, obedience and diligence also marked Ruth, but it was faith in God which was noticed, and gained the reward. Happy if we also can exhibit such single-hearted vigour and purpose and also set the Lord, in our meas-

ure, always before our face.

I desire to draw attention only to a few of the features in the second chapter of Ruth. First of all it was the barley harvest and then the wheat harvest. Barley in scripture typifies resurrection. The sheaf of first-fruits is figurative of Christ in resurrection, "the first-fruits of them that slept." Then again wheat typifies manhood according to God "the second man out of heaven," "the corn of wheat" which has brought forth much fruit.

Let us dwell a little on the glean- ing. In verse 2 it is "ears of corn," then verse 7 "among the sheaves" and finally verse 16 "handfuls of purpose." All these indicate various appreciations of Christ, prizes gained through diligent gleaning in the fields of Boaz. In verse 3 Ruth gleanes "after the reapers." There are those who labour in the word and doctrine. It is well to keep close to them. Then there are the maidens. Perhaps they set forth the subjective fruits of grace in the soul — follow righteousness, faith, love and peace with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. Then the young men may represent more that which is official, men as distinct from women, and young here to show the vigour required in the work. The servant over the reapers appears to be a type of the Holy Spirit. There is, of course, much more. Weighty is the word "go not to glean in another field."

Then let us notice something of the food arrangements. There is individual refreshment, "from the vessels," that which is stored up, and ever available, perhaps a reference for us to the written word, or written ministry. What a need today to search the scriptures, to seek out the book of the law, and read! Even education authorities today are alarmed at the unwillingness of the

rising generation to read books! Then "at meal times come thou hither" This is company enjoyment. Sheep usually feed together. But notice particularly "He (Boaz) reached her parched corn." In the company, that was something specially for Ruth; individual attention we may say, which is so delightful both to read and to experience. "I will manifest Myself" (John 14: 21), when the conditions are fulfilled.

Let us also observe that Ruth advanced in her appreciation of Boaz himself. At first it seems he was unknown to her, since she depended on the testimony of Naomi. Then in verse 1 we read "Kinsman", *mod'*, which could be translated "friend". What a Friend we have in Jesus! Then, also in verse 1 *mispahah*, of the "family of Elimelech", a step further forward. Later in verse 20 *garob*, near of kin, i.e. much closer than *gael*, kinsman redeemer with the right of redemption. This is very blessed. Like the man in John 9 ("a man", "prophet", "the Son of God"), gleaning in the fields of Boaz leads to an increasing appreciation of Him, and may it be said, a decreasing appreciation of herself. Grace ever works this way.

The day's gleaning brought in an ephah, almost four gallons, according to all commentators, a good day's work. The threshing floor only yielded six measures, rather less. Souls in distress, in quantity, often gain less of scripture, but more of Himself. And the threshing floor leads on to chapter 4, the truth of union, and fruit for God. Let us not shun the promised cross.

In chapter 2 Ruth is prominent — Ruth's need is met. Many of us never seem to get beyond, What am

I going to get out of it? We are blessed with all spiritual blessings and His desire is toward us. But, beloved, it is not enough. In chapter 4 Boaz is prominent — Boaz's need is met. Ruth is blessed indeed; marries Boaz, and in union, we may say gains himself and shares all he possesses. Naomi also is comforted, for Boaz becomes to her "a restorer of thy life" and a "nourisher of thine old age". But most of all Boaz has his portion. He does worthily in Ephrath, becomes famous in Bethlehem: his name is famous in Israel. Now God's glory will yet fill the universe, and that is the greatest thought of all. The true Boaz also will yet have His portion when He sees of the fruit of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. How blessed if both God and Christ can have Their portion even now, and in present spiritual worship in the assembly. Let us at least seek to be on this line.

The lesson at the close is very simple and very plain. How little Ruth knew what great things she would set in motion, when, in Moab first, she was steadfastly minded, and in Bethlehem next, she began to glean. Let us also seek in our small way, intelligently, to put our trust in God, and in affection, follow after the greater than Boaz, the mighty man of wealth. We little know what God can do. We noticed at the commencement that the book of Ruth is set in a dark day. Does it not suggest that we also can live in moral superiority to conditions both without and within? Chastened we are, severely, but love is behind it all, and He has not left off His kindness to the living and the dead. What He has done in a past day, God can do today.

FAITH IN THE NEW COVENANT

C. Y. RICHARDSON

JEREMIAH the prophet lived at the close of the Kingdom of Judah. Most of the prophets were put to death by the sinful nation, but he according to the promise of God was permitted to see the end.

We speak of him as the weeping prophet, and no wonder. The nation had given itself up to the abominations of the heathen. The temple was defiled by horrible markings on the walls, all of which told on the spirit of him who was both a priest and a prophet. His fame appears to have lingered on long after his death, for in the New Testament we read the words "Jeremiah or one of the prophets".

Is there anything in his ministry which distinguishes him from the other prophets? Yes, he is the only prophet who in so many words speaks of a "New Covenant". The closing visions of Ezekiel give similar details regarding the work of grace in the hearts of redeemed Israel. But it fell to the lot of Jeremiah to give the now familiar words: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah". One would think that the very words "a new covenant" would make any reader of the scripture turn immediately to see the teaching in the book of Exodus regarding the old covenant. Before we do so let us note that God always wished to act towards His creatures in grace. I do not forget the subject of His government. But the New Testament makes it very plain that God always had in His mind to set us before Himself in grace, and the plain fact is that none shall ever

stand before Him in any other way than this. Peter in his first Epistle speaks of the "true grace of God wherein ye stand".

It pleased the blessed God however, to suggest to Israel on their deliverance from Egypt, that He would give them a law which they said they would keep. It never seemed to enter their minds that they would be unable to keep the commandments. They did not realize that in their flesh dwelt no good thing, or that on account of the weakness of the flesh even the law was rendered unable to produce righteousness, though the law itself was holy, just and good.

Here, we may ask, Have we, Christians, understood these things? It was added because of transgressions; that is to make Israel, formerly sinners, now transgressors, and not only so, but to show the true character of sin, for now sin becomes defiant, and abounds regardless of there being a law to be transgressed. The law also brings to light the hidden desires found in the heart of man, for although many might say they have not transgressed the first nine commandments (supposing they were under law), how many would be foolish enough to say they have never coveted? It was this that "slew" the apostle who said "when the commandment came sin revived, and I died". Again in another place he tells us that the strength of sin is the law.

The great weakness of the law lay in this:

- a. That it could not gain life.
- b. If it failed to do this then there could be no righteous

living on man's part.

- c. That it could not give the Holy Spirit by Whom alone we have the power to fulfil the righteous requirements of the law.
- d. Nor could the law give a sense of relationship with God enabling us to cry by the Spirit "Abba Father".

The people agreed to be put under law, and with the fearful signs and sounds of Sinai ringing in their ears, and with warnings to keep from the mount, they heard the ten words. These and other statutes were written in a book. "Moses offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar, and he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." The agreement was committed to writing and sealed with blood.

I now call your attention to another scene on the night on which our Lord was betrayed. With desire He had desired to eat the Passover with His disciples, and as they were eating, He took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to the disciples saying, Take eat; this is my body; and having given thanks for the cup He said, This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This is in striking contrast with the happenings at the foot of Sinai. The Lord Jesus does not speak of the blood of a covenant which bound our sins to us, but the blood of the new covenant shed for the remission of sins, the very sins, or transgres-

sions that were under the first covenant (Heb. 9). Peter rightly speaks of the precious blood of Christ, and we join and sing:

"Shed for rebels,
Shed for sinners,
Shed for me."

I should now like to say something regarding faith in the new covenant. Note the order of Jeremiah's prophecy. After writing about the new covenant, and stating in the strongest language the Lord's intention to have Israel before Him forever, he next gives an account of the prophet's personal circumstances. Zedekiah the king had shut him up in the court of the prison which was in the king's house. The Chaldeans were outside the city walls, and although the siege was temporarily raised by the Egyptians yet soon the city was taken and the last king of Judah imprisoned and blinded. Whilst in prison, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah with a strange demand. He was told that Hanameel would come to him saying, "Buy thee my field which is in Anathoth". This was readily agreed to by the prophet, who subscribed the evidence, sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed him the money. What a strange thing for the prophet to do! Soon he would be almost a foreigner in his own land. The glory had departed. The ark of the covenant would soon be lost forever, Judah taken into captivity. Yet in accordance with the will of the Lord, he buys a field and buys it for himself.

This was the action of a man who had faith in the New Covenant. All was gone so far as the old covenant was concerned, but he realised that the God of all grace was to make a new covenant with Israel and in this he trusted. His heart was established in grace.

We can now make some applica-

tion of this to ourselves. It is granted that there will be no revival of Christendom to its original position of witness. We are fast hurrying on to apostasy. Yet, admitting all this we know that the Church is called with a heavenly calling, not only to be with the Lord Jesus forever, but to share in His rule of the universe as His complement, when all things are put under His feet. It is lamentable that so few Christians appear to enter into these things — “the deep things of God”. It is evident that only those whose hearts are established in grace do so.

We live in days very like those of Jeremiah. The time has come for judgment to begin at the House of God. It is only faith in the God of

all grace which will keep us. The truth given by the apostle Paul to the Ephesian saints regarding the purpose of God is obviously the only thing which will keep us in our evil days. We should have learned by this time that man after the flesh is a failure, but what if we are discouraged by the failure of the Church? We fall back upon the grace of God. “God Who has saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

Faith in the New Covenant would lead us to buy the field of the purpose of God and buy it for ourselves.

TROUBLE

J. R. JAMESON

“**M**AN is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5: 7). The believer knows where to turn in times of trouble, because, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum 1: 7). Many down the ages have thanked God for such passages, which have been a real comfort.

Three times in John’s gospel it is recorded that Jesus was troubled. What distress came upon the two sisters in Bethany, when their brother died. Jesus heard and He came, the Scripture saying, “When Jesus saw her weeping . . . He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.” He really and truly entered into their sorrow. He was

troubled at the ravages of sin and death, and “Jesus wept.” He is just the same today, and He is able to sympathize with those that mourn. Countless numbers of saints are proving His comfort and consolation at this very moment.

In John 12 also we find Jesus troubled. He was alone in the garden, with the cross before Him, and He was exceeding sorrowful, and said, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name” (verse 27). The blessed Saviour is here anticipating what it would mean to Him (the Holy One) to be made sin (2 Cor. 5: 21), to become the sin-bearer (1

Pet. 2: 24), to bear the judgment (Zech. 13: 7), to be forsaken (Ps. 22: 1). Faith bows in worship at the contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ in His loving obedience.

In John 13 we read, "He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (13: 21). It seems almost incredible that one who had been a companion of the Lord Jesus so long, sharing all the gracious consideration which He must have had for them each one, should betray the Master. No wonder He was troubled. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41: 9).

So we see Jesus troubled at the graveside, troubled in the garden, troubled by the traitor. Now in John 14: 1 He says to us today, "Let not your heart be troubled," as though He said, I will bear all the trouble, so that you may have all the comfort. What a wonderful Saviour to love us so much, and adding the precious promise. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

There are several passages in the Old Testament where **trouble** is mentioned. In Psalm 27: 4 we find the writer delighting in the Lord, much as the believer today finds spiritual refreshment in the companionship of Christ. So when days of trial come, the Psalmist is able to say, "In the time of trouble, He shall hide me in his pavilion, . . . He shall set me up upon a rock." Times of trouble most certainly

come, but what comfort in "He will hide me."

Trouble! What volumes could be written. Someone in deep distress might say, no one would be willing to listen to my tale of woe. Yes, there is **One** who will. Read Psalm 142: 1. "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication, I poured out my complaint before Him, I **shewed before Him my trouble.**" Many have done likewise and have obtained help and comfort. However dark things may seem to you at present, there is a path for you to tread. Read the next verse. "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then **Thou knewest my path.**" The Lord is able to see the way when we cannot, therefore we must draw near to Him and wait upon Him to open up the way, and He will. For He loves each one.

Quite likely some reader will say, mercifully I am not myself in any trouble, but there is trouble all round about me. Here again the Psalmist knew what this was like, for he said, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me" (138: 7). What real comfort there is in turning to the Scriptures and finding one and another who have passed through trial and sorrow, but have been helped and comforted of God: to find also that the Lord Himself when He was upon earth passed through trouble, and so now He is able to minister comfort to us as we need it along life's way. To Him be the glory. Soon we shall be with Him and like Him. Trouble ceases on that tranquil, happy shore.

THERE are certain things relative to normal, everyday life, which have to be performed daily, in order to maintain a measure of good health and strength. The body needs food, exercise and rest, which, when taken in moderation, enable the person to enjoy the things of this life.

In like manner, for the maintenance of healthy spiritual life, the Christian must perform with regularity the instructions laid down in the Word of God, the Scriptures of truth. These are recorded for our profit and good, that God might be glorified thereby.

The Psalmist speaks of having sorrow in his heart **daily** (Ps. 13: 2). Many have this same experience day by day, but have also learned the secret of casting their burden and sorrow upon the Lord, Who never fails to sustain. This secret is declared in the Psalm, "But I have trusted in Thy mercy: my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation" (Ps. 13: 5).

Relating the goodness of the Lord, David says: "Blessed be the Lord, Who **daily** loadeth us with benefits" (Ps. 68: 19). This is the response of a thankful heart, having every need adequately met from the bountiful provision of God. Truly, this is good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, according to the measure of the One Who cares for us with infinite love.

In the prayer the Lord taught His disciples, He exhorted them to ask their heavenly Father to give them their **daily** bread (Matt. 6: 11). By this means they would express their dependence upon Him day by day, and also be free from anxious care and fear. As in the days when God sent down manna from heaven to

feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, even so now, in our day, He can supply our temporal needs for the sustenance of life.

As to our Christian walk, we should always endeavour to be **daily** His delight (Prov. 8: 30). This was shown forth in perfection by the Son of God, both in time and eternity. To enable us to be wellpleasing unto God, we must know His Word, which not only declares Who He is, but also expresses His desires toward us. May we be more like the Bereans of whom it is written: "They searched the Scriptures **daily**, whether those things were so" (Acts 17: 11). It is when we know His will that we can intelligently please Him and serve Him.

This desire to be here for the joy of the heart of God, will cost us a measure of sacrifice and hardship. Did not the Lord Jesus plainly say: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily** and follow Me" (Luke 9: 23). This is not the satisfying of the flesh, or enjoying the things of this world, but rather taking sides in a practical way with a rejected Saviour, Who is now received and acclaimed by the glory. The apostle Paul could say: "I die **daily**" (1 Cor. 15: 31). Each day he reckoned himself dead to self, and was thus enabled to live for Christ, until his service was completed.

Also, we have the great power of the Lord in the proclamation of the gospel, by adding to the church **daily**, such as should be saved (Acts 4: 47). With this divine encouragement, the apostles went forth in the work of the Lord, and so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number **daily**. May

we too, seek to have this confidence, and experience these wonderful results, even in our day.

Finally, let us be always concerned as to the spiritual well-being of our fellow pilgrims, taking heed to

the seasonable exhortation: "But exhort one another **daily**, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3: 13).

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

"Consider Him"

"Consideration, as it were, opens the door between the head and the heart. The understanding having received truths, lays them up in the memory, and consideration conveys them from thence to the affections. What excellency would there be in much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between head and heart were but opened, and the affections did but correspond to the understanding. He is usually the best scholar, whose apprehension is quick, clear, and tenacious; but he is usually the best Christian whose apprehension is the deepest and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passage, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from that to the heart. And though the Spirit be the principal cause; yet, on our part this passage must be opened by consideration. . . .

Expatiate on the praises of God, and open His excellencies to thy heart, till the holy fire of love begins to kindle in thy breast. If thou feelest thy love not yet burn, lead thy heart farther, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Thus, reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to thy heart;

plead thus with thy frozen soul, till, with David, thou canst say, "My heart was hot within me: while I was musing, the fire burned." If this will not rouse up thy love, thou hast all Christ's personal excellencies to add, all His particular mercies to thyself, all His sweet and near relations to thee, and the happiness of thy everlasting abode with Him. Only follow them close to thy heart. Deal with it, as Christ did with Peter, when He thrice asked him, "Lovest thou Me?" till he was grieved, and answered, "Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee." So grieve and shame thy heart out of its stupidity, till thou canst truly say, "I know, and my Lord knows, that I love Him."

(Richard Baxter: The Saint's Everlasting Rest, 1649).

The Heavens

In John 3: 12 the Lord speaks of "the earthlies" and "the heavens". The former include the kingdom of God and re-birth, and the latter the love of God and eternal life. This verse opens up a great vista on the rest of the New Testament, especially on "the heavens" in Ephesians. Here indeed, the Lord is telling, by the Spirit, of "the heavens".

5. SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES

“**A** spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.” Over against the material sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, Peter’s Epistle presents the spiritual sacrifices of the true worship. The material sacrifices were types or shadows — accurate outlines without substance — of the spiritual sacrifices. What, then, **are** these spiritual sacrifices? In them must be the very substance of what the true worshippers bring to God.

Four antitypes of the Levitical sacrifices are described in the New Testament. One of these stands above the others as **the great sacrifice**, “towering o’er the wrecks of time”, when Christ by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. This sacrifice stands for ever apart and unique; it will be the subject of the song of the redeemed in heaven, when there is glory to God in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen. This sacrifice of Calvary is **His work alone**, and no other can share in it.

Next might be placed the passage in Romans 12: 1 “I beseech you . . . to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” The tense implies, not a continuous or often repeated sacrifice, but a **once-for-all decision**, motivated by the mercies of God, previously explained. The meaning here is not stated to be the work of a priestly family, offering in worship, but uses the concept of sacrifice to portray the irrevocable way in which it is the believer’s privilege to yield his body for God’s use. This sacrifice will accompany sincere worship, but it could hardly be the spiritual worship itself.

Hebrews 13: 16 presents an important subsidiary application of the idea of sacrifice, in doing good and giving for the needs of others.

For the present purpose, the habitual employment of the spiritual house, the Christian priesthood, is the subject of 1 Peter 2: 5. What do the Levitical passages themselves, illuminated by other parts of Scripture, yield as we meditate upon them? We proceed to a conclusion by four steps.

1. Those sacrifices which could be brought as a willing response to God, in contrast to those commanded for sins and trespasses, bear several marks of a distinctive character. Associated with them were indications that they were offered to bring something **pleasurable to God**. The first of these indications is the repeated statement that they were “for a sweet savour” unto Jehovah. We are not to suppose that burning animals were intrinsically pleasing to God, but in the scheme of redemption they were a sweet savour to God because of their typical significance. Certain accompaniments of the sacrifices also suggest a fragrance and sweetness rising to Him. On the meal offering was put frankincense; and when the moment of offering arrived, though only a handful of the meal was burned as an offering, the burning must include “all the frankincense thereof”. Moreover, certain actions connected with the sacrifices vividly portray a presentation before Jehovah to give Him pleasure. Parts of the peace offerings were “waved” and “heaved” before Him, as though He wished to linger, with His people at peace with Himself, prolonging His delight in the offering. Thus the

Levitical commandments bear the character of being designed to represent what was pleasurable to the Lord.

2. Is there the faintest doubt in Scripture where the Father's pleasure is centred? In eternity and across the whole arch of time, the Scripture speaks with one voice that "the Father's full delight is centred in His Son." Hear the voice of the Son, speaking as that wisdom, whom the Lord possessed in the beginning of His way, before His works of old: "When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, . . . and I was daily His delight" (Proverbs 8: 30). Of Him who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the Lord calls, "Behold My Servant, . . . Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42: 1). At His baptism, and also at His transfiguration, lo, a voice from heaven: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mathew 3: 17 and 17: 5). His giving Himself . . . "an offering and a sacrifice to God (was) a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5: 1).

3. After his delight in a person, nothing gives the lover so much pleasure as hearing the beloved praised. It is balm to a parent's ear to hear a child spoken well of. This is probably the meaning of Hebrews 13, 15: "By Him (Jesus), therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, praising His name." The sacrifice of praise to God derives its fragrance to Him from the sweet savour of the Name of Jesus. It is thus pleasurable to the Father for His people to commune with Him, sharing His delight in His Well-Beloved Son.

4. If the spiritual sacrifices consist in the priests of the spiritual house communing with the Father

in the sense of telling over and sharing with Him His delight in Christ, the Levitical sacrifices themselves concentrate attention upon His death. **The central substance of Christian worship is thus speaking to the Father in the power of the Spirit about the fragrance of that obedient sacrifice, when the Son offered Himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour.** All the intricate detail of the Levitical system, apparently so dull in itself, springs to life when we see it as speaking of the delight with which God takes minute account of the work of Christ. The various offerings present the special points of view from which that unique sacrifice is viewed in God's sight.

Having reached by these steps an understanding of the meaning of the spiritual sacrifices, it is indeed worth while to dwell a little on these special points of view. Each of the "sweet savour" offerings described in Leviticus 1 to 7 with such rich variety of detail, possesses one distinctive feature which provides a starting point by determining its special meaning. These distinctive features are: in the burnt offering, that it was wholly for God because all burned on the altar: in the meal offering, that there was no blood, no life given: and in the peace offering, that the priest and the offerer shared the food provided.

The burnt offering came first in God's order. In it the death of Christ, although an atonement for sin, is seen as devoted to glorifying God. In the world where God was dishonoured by man's disobedience, God has been honoured and glorified by the obedience of Christ Jesus. Christ was found in death through obedience to God, in contrast with Adam, who was found in death through disobedience to God. "Being found in fashion as a man, He

humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2: 8). The smoke of every burnt offering rising from Israel's altars, little though the worshippers knew it, spoke to God of Him who would say, "Lo, I come (replacing the sacrifices of the law), to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10: 7). The privilege of the true worshippers in this, the Spirit's day, is to penetrate to the real meaning of these burnt offerings, leave them behind as God has left them behind, and commune with Him in worship about the reality, the true Burnt Offering.

The meal offering was never offered alone because "without shedding of blood is no remission", but it speaks of the sweet savour rising to God, from every thought, word, and deed in the earthly life of Jesus. The fine, pure, even textured flour, burnt on the altar with all the frankincense, reminds us that the perfections of Jesus were His delight, and the remembrance of this before Him is one of the spiritual sacrifices.

The peace offering represents that same unique sacrifice considered as the basis on which we can be reconciled to God, and, at peace with Him, share the food of His table.

The grades of each sacrifice (a bullock, a lamb, or even a bird) are of great interest to all who look for help to be active worshippers. The offerer's wealth determined what grade he could bring. While each grade was equally acceptable to God, the worshipper's diligence in private in acquiring wealth provided the substance of what he could bring to the door of the tabernacle as an offering to God. For the Christian worshipper, it is not earthly wealth which is in question, but the wealth in spiritual things acquired by diligence in secret. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom, know-

ledge and love, and it is growth in grace and in the knowledge of Him which enriches our capacity for bringing to God whatever delights Him. A picture of this is found in Psalm 45: 1. "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things I have made touching the King." The things we make, in secret prayer and meditation on Christ form the spiritual substance suitable to be brought as a spiritual sacrifice to God.

To some readers, this view of the teaching of Scripture on worship will be so complete a novelty as to be difficult to grasp. To share in such worship is, however, an experience which has come to be for thousands of Christians in many lands, the very heart of Christian faith and practice. The reason for the strangeness with which these thoughts will appear to many, is the totally different understanding of the meaning of worship which prevails. To many true believers the word worship describes the totality of the parts of public services, including prayers, hymns, Scripture reading, and sermon as conducted by the president. There is, moreover, a great revival of interest in liturgy, or set forms of prayer for public "worship". This is largely connected with the ecumenical movement, and indeed the liturgical tendency is spreading far outside the traditionally ritualistic communions. Little attention need be given beyond noticing it here, for the very simple reason that its supports are admittedly outside the New Testament. Few would claim anything in the New Testament itself, independent of tradition, to support liturgical practices, although many believe, on flimsy evidence, that parts of the New Testament actually are rudimentary liturgies.

This point is illustrated by a quotation from T. S. Garrett of the

Church of South India. "One reason why the accounts of the Lord's Supper which we have in the Synoptic Gospels and 1 Corinthians 11 tell us so little detail about this event is that they have already been given a liturgical form before their inclusion in these written books. The language is liturgical in character . . . clearly quoting a traditional narrative already used in the worship of the Church. . . . There is much to be said for the view that parts of the New Testament were composed for liturgical reading". How can we know that these are liturgical passages? Here is the answer. "All this is interpreting details in the New Testament in the light of what we know of Eucharistic worship in the second and third centuries: but if these conjectures are correct, there is in the New Testament at an earlier stage of its development that same dynamic combination of liturgical order and charismatic freedom which seems to have been characteristic of the fluid eucharistic rites of the pre-Nicene Church."* To see certain passages as liturgical is thus conjectural, based on tradition.

Many a true believer, in repeating by rote from the Missal or the Book of Common Prayer, "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world" will be in heart and spirit offering up a spiritual sacrifice, and, pray God, these pages may help some to do so. Nevertheless such a person is rather in the position of a person driving a car with all the brakes applied, since all around is designed to encourage an Old Testament worship, and he has to go clean against the stream in offering worship in spirit and in truth. A fixed liturgy removes altogether the rich

variety of that free utterance of what each has made "touching the King". What has been gained in its place is a form of lovely words of venerable and dignified antiquity. The appeal of these is not denied, but must be resisted strong in faith, if we are not to sell obedience to the authority of the Word of God for human tradition.

When we come to consider the subject of hymns and worship, out of the store of hymns specially written for such worship, perhaps the best examples can be given of presenting the fragrance of Christ as the substance of worship. One such may well bring this present chapter to a close.

Blest God and Father, in Thy sight
We bow and own Thy grace;
We worship in the glorious light,
Which shines in Jesus' face.

The glories of His work we bring —
Thee glorified we see;
His deep perfections gladly sing,
And tell them forth to Thee.

He fills Thy presence, fully known
To Thee alone His worth;
But in our hearts Thy light hath
shone,
As sons of heavenly birth.

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise Thy
name
In God the Father's ear;
And worship Thee, Thou holy
Lamb,
Whose blood has brought us near.

* "Christian Worship" T. S. Garrett, 1961. Pp. 35-37.

THE BOOK OF JOB

HERBERT HIRST

or

WHY DO GOOD MEN SUFFER?

IT is significant that whereas the narrative of the creation of the heavens and the earth occupies only two chapters of the fifty in the book of Genesis, the account of the afflictions and trials of one godly man expands into a book of forty-two chapters. Our blessed God is far more concerned with the moral and spiritual training and progress of His people than with the great wonders of the material universe. A God whose nature is **love** takes pleasure in **persons** rather than **places**; for it is the nature of love to beget love in others. Let the people of God undergoing sorrows and sufferings at this present time take encouragement from this evidence of God's unflinching love towards them in a very personal way.

The irreproachable moral character of Job is stated clearly in the first verse so that we might keep it well in mind and not be led into other thoughts of him by anything we read later in the book. His circumstances, too, bore witness to the truth that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4: 8). Verse 5 of the first chapter draws a lovely picture of the reality of Job's piety. It was neither sanctimoniousness nor affectation but a true-hearted effort "continually" to lead every member of his family into his own habits of godliness. Not content with their material prosperity, he "rose up early in the morning" to offer a sacrifice to God for each one, desiring above all else that his children should be right with God, not failing to render what was due to Him.

Quite unknown to Job, things were happening in reference to him in heaven. Not, I judge, in "the heaven of heavens", the Father's house (John 14: 2) which bears the impress in all its parts of the blessed nature of Him who dwells therein, where all is sinless bliss; but in that part of "the heavens" to which Satan is allowed access. There, the sons of God — angels, I doubt not — presented themselves before God, possibly for His directions in regard to their service (Hebrews 1: 13, 14); and Satan, the Adversary, came also among them fresh from his hateful activities "in the earth". And now God took the initiative by asking the enemy if he had considered His servant Job, a man unequalled in the earth for uprightness, fear of God and avoidance of evil.

In the presence of God, Satan charged Job with hypocrisy, attributing the characteristics approved by God to the material prosperity lavished upon him. Let the earthly substance be taken from him and Job's piety and fear of God would give way to blasphemy! Satan inferred that no credit was due to Job for loyalty to the government that prospered and advanced him, for serving a Master who paid so well. No doubt Satan reflected that if Job were unequalled in all the earth for his godliness, any success Satan might have with him would reflect very ill on God's honour and authority over him, and secondly on the loyalty of all others professing godliness. Satan knows, no doubt, the sinfulness of the heart of man, for he has had success with it; but he does **not** know the heart of God and the glorious, divine effect the

love of that heart has when received into the heart of man!

Satan was given permission to inflict sudden and overwhelming calamities upon Job, depriving him of all his possessions and all his children in a single day. Satan knows no compassion, but his dealings with God's saints are strictly limited and controlled. What great issues, for God and His servant, now rested upon Job's reactions! Under this satanic pressure, he preserved his trust in God, maintaining that he came into the world with nothing and would take nothing out of it; that it was God who had given to him all he had received in the interval, that He was sovereign and perfectly entitled to take away the mercies given for time only (chap. 1: 21). These healthful considerations put things into their proper perspective in regard to man's life here below; they enabled patient Job, as they would enable us, to declare in the midst of sore trial "Blessed be the name of the Lord". Job did not raise a punitive expedition against the Sabeans and the Chaldean marauders. He left vengeance in the hand of the One to whom it belongs (Hebrews 10: 30).

Satan, thus proved to be a slanderer and false accuser, shifted his ground and asserted that if Job were touched in his own flesh, he would curse God to His face. Allowed to put this to trial, while sparing Job's life, Satan smote Job with sore boils from head to foot. His distress now moved his wife to taunt him with still retaining his integrity and urged him to curse God and die if this was all that integrity brought down from God. But faithful Job again maintained God's sovereign right to bestow either prosperity or the reverse of it and still did not sin with his lips as Satan had affirmed that he

would. God's honour and estimate of His servant were now vindicated and Satan, exposed and defeated, disappears from the scene, never to reappear in the remainder of the book.

The first principle of this book of Job, is that Job did not know and never found out about the dealings of God with Satan which were the real origin of his painful history. Could it not be that questions of God's sovereign rights and honour, the integrity of His throne of government, are bound up sometimes with our afflictions too? Afflictions arising not from our evil-doings but rather from our uprightness and events occurring quite outside our ken? Could we be trusted to maintain God's glory under fierce assault from the enemy of souls? May God give us grace to endure like Job should the need arise!

God's ways with Job, however, were not yet completed. Job's three friends, learning of his sore trials, came to commiserate with him, and the sight of his distress — they did not even recognize him — so greatly moved them that they sat silently with him in his misery for seven whole days. Perhaps this effect of his sufferings upon his three friends, bringing him more into the presence of man than of God, brought into his heart different feelings about the humbling change in his fortunes. The fall from conditions commanding universal admiration to others evoking mostly the contempt of one's fellows, must have been exceedingly trying to Job's spirit, as witness chap. 19: 13-19. What Satan's malicious onslaughts failed to achieve, the eyes of his friends upon him for a full week seem to have accomplished. How true that:

“ In Thy presence we are happy;
 In Thy presence we're secure;
 In Thy presence all afflictions
 We can easily endure;
 In Thy presence we can conquer,
 We can suffer, we can die;
 Wandering from Thee we are feeble;
 Let Thy love then keep us nigh.”

Asaph found out to his lasting profit (Psalm 73) that in the presence of God a remarkable power enabled him to understand things once far too difficult for him, transforming his outlook on life in consequence.

Job now “opened his mouth and cursed his day”. Death, he said, was better than life under such conditions. Better, indeed, never to have been born! This outburst opens the mouths of his three friends and each, in turn, argues with Job as to the reasons for his afflictions, and his attitude to God in regard to them. Job replies to each in turn.

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, the three friends, were of one mind in reference to the **cause** of Job's sore afflictions, and a fair, but very brief summary of their arguments would be something like this. They that **sow** wickedness must **expect** to receive a **crop** of evil. Observation, experience and tradition have all taught that God frustrates the evil-doer **here and now** — “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” Job's sufferings were, therefore, in the nature of retribution, the just judgment of God for his sin; for in the calamities brought upon the wicked and the prosperity brought upon the righteous can be read a more or less accurate measurement of His government of them, whether in approval or disapproval of their conduct. From this it was clear that Job's only hope was to turn to God in repentance and confession of his secret sin. Then would prosperity return and longevity be his portion.

Remembering what the Spirit of God placed on record in the very first verse of this book, we cannot be surprised that poor suffering Job resented such treatment and such reasoning from friends. In his condition he expected pity, at least, but received only condemnation. His conscience did not charge him with the sin and wickedness they imputed to him. Let them show him when and where it was committed. Out of the presence of God, very much in the presence of his unsympathetic friends and in heated controversy with them, Job, whose name perhaps means “the cry of woe”, was moved to say that God was “multiplying his wounds **without cause**”; he lamented that there was no arbitrator to bring himself and God together, for then would he say to God “Thou knowest that I am not wicked . . . yet Thou dost destroy me”. Thus he charged God with injustice and when his friends pressed home their case, Job said many other things to the same effect.

His friends' theory that adversities and suffering are invariably retribution from God on account of wrong-doing was mischievous indeed. Sometimes the wicked prosper (Psalms 73: 3; 37: 35; and Jeremiah 12: 1, 2), and sometimes the righteous are “plagued and chastened” (Psalm 73: 14). Our God does not always expose to the eyes of all His secret dealings with our souls; and these dealings are **always** dictated by His unchanging love towards us. How thankful we should be for this! It is clear, is it not, that wicked men frequently prosper and then die in peace, as Job himself pointed out (24: 23, 24); for the day of reckoning, when God shall bring **every** work into judgment, has not yet come. Verse 23 of this chapter seems to say that God gives the evil man “to be in safety”

and that he even considers this to be divine approval of his ways. But, "His (God's) eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone . . . cut off" like ripe ears of corn; the day of reckoning is still to be faced when the "great white throne" of Revelation chapter 20 is established.

Another character, who had listened in silence to all the discussions, now intervenes. His name, Elihu (My God is Jehovah), points to his ability to speak on behalf of God and make Him known. The effect of this man's words was to bring Job back into the presence of God, God who, in spite of Job's charges, will do **no** injustice (34: 12-19); Job should have trusted divine wisdom in this discipline of sorrow (34: 31) emphasized greatly by the complete misunderstanding by his three friends of both Job and God. What Job did not understand, God would teach, when his spirit became teachable once again (34: 32). God, he said, despised no-one, but maintained ceaseless vigilance over the righteous and opened their ears to His discipline (36: 5-10) as He graciously did, in fact, now with Job. God's greatness should humble man (36: 22-26); and combined with His excellence in power and judgment and abundance of justice, He has a **heart which will not afflict** man for the sake of so doing (37: 23).

Finally, Job is addressed by God Himself, making him feel the truth of Elihu's words concerning His greatness and the folly of contending with Him and of thinking to reprove Him. Truly humbled, poor Job could only answer — "I am vile . . . I will lay mine hand upon my mouth . . . I will proceed no further" (40: 3-5). God further presses home the divine lesson to His beloved servant; and His work of discipline, begun when He first ad-

dressed Satan concerning Job because He knew His servant's need, is now complete, for Job says, "I uttered that I understood not . . . I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now MINE EYE SEETH THEE. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (42: 1-6). The lesson now learnt, far outweighing the suffering he had endured, was **not** what he had **done** wrong, as his three friends all mistakenly supposed, thus adding to his grief, **but what he was** in his own nature. This lesson is one of the most difficult for all of us to learn. Have we each learnt in the presence of God that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing"? The blameless man, upright and avoiding evil, loathes himself when he sees himself in the presence of God! Great is the day when we learn this lesson, for it is the ending of the captivity of being chained to one's selfish interests, and liberation to be concerned in divine love for others (42: 10). Thus the book we have considered shows, as it has been said by others, that discipline is not by any means always **punitive** and not always **preventive** (to keep us out of sin) but sometimes **promotive**, for our spiritual advance in the true knowledge of ourselves and of our God.

This valuable book of Job demonstrates in heart-warming fashion, as James reminds us in his epistle (5: 11), that "the end of the Lord" (that is to say, the finality to which He is conducting all His own) shows Him to be "very pitiful, and of tender mercy".

"O keep us, love divine, near Thee,
That we our nothingness may
know,
Walking in faith while here
below
And ever to Thy glory be."

"WHOM THE LORD LOVETH"

F. J. FENNELL

THE Hebrew believers were not finding the Christian pathway strewn with roses, and the various kinds of trial they experienced are detailed in several passages. They endured the contradiction of sinners against themselves, reproach and affliction, the spoiling of their goods. It is no wonder that they found these things grievous and not joyous: that their hands hung down and their knees were feeble; that they were wearied and faint in their minds.

In sending them this message, their Father purposed it, to cast the light of His love on their pathway. He furnished an explanation, a meaning, so that doubt and perplexity should be removed. By this they were to be restored to the vigour they had formerly shown. This is one with the experiences of God's children in all ages, for the Lord chastens and scourges every child whom He receives. The long line of those who endured enmity and falsehood, opposition and persecution began with Abel. It included Joseph and Moses and David and Job and the prophets. From all these records we may draw strength and comfort in the knowledge of our Father's love and wisdom. These all endured discipline in the school of God and in them we may see God's plan at work and also see its purpose and end and the resulting character.

These and many, many other kinds of affliction are the lot of many of God's children who will read these lines. Our Father does not wish us to be in doubt and darkness about the meaning of our sufferings, but in this epistle sends to us also the explanation, the purpose, and the exhortation which will help and strengthen us.

What is the explanation of our

sufferings? First, God dispels the fears that they arise because God has forgotten us. A little later they are taught not to fear what man shall do to them, because "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". On the contrary, these sufferings sprang directly out of their settled and sure relationship with God as His children, and from the fact of His love. It is "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth". Chastening proves sonship; no chastening, no sonship. And the love of God has ever been the experience of those who have understood the meaning of the suffering. A most striking example of the fortitude which comes from taking opposition and persecution from the Lord, is the case of David, when, in sore affliction, he is cursed by Shimei. Abishai wanted to take off his head, but David replied, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." If the Lord had said to Shimei, Curse David, then David needs those curses, and realising this, they will yield fruit in his blessing and ultimate prosperity. A much tried servant of the Lord, Samuel Rutherford, has written: "Losses, disappointments, ill-tongues, loss of friends, of country, are God's workmen, set on work to work good for you. Let not the Lord's dealings seem harsh, rough or unfatherly. When the Lord's blessed will bloweth across your desires, it is best, in humility, to strake sail to Him."

Thus, we are next to understand that the purpose of our affliction is chastening, that is discipline or child-training. An athlete taking part in the Empire Games, told an interviewer about her many social

hardships and sacrifices during training; but her coach had recently died. "I went through it all just for him" she said. "Now, I hate it all." The personal relationship enabled her to bear the hardship involved in attaining his goal for her as an athlete.

The discipline of the pathway carries with it immeasurable profit (v. 10). We are apt to think of our sufferings as **loss** — for example illness, bereavement, unanswered prayer or difficult domestic or business conditions. But the Father who has sent them says they are for our "profit"; and not only ourselves personally profit, but others of the sons who may become lame on the way.

The purpose of chastening is "that we might be partakers of His holiness" (v. 10). This implies that it brings us nearer to Him in character. No one is in doubt that, in natural things, it is sharing a common life and nature which dictates both the kind of training a parent gives and the power to profit by it on the part of a child. This superb purpose is in the mind of the Lord in sending discipline, that His children may grow up manifesting His character of holiness.

The fruit of discipline comes **afterwards** (v. 11). At the moment

of suffering, and during the course of suffering, there is grief. This is indeed our experience, that **for the present** there is no joy, but grief. The effect of this is to strengthen us to endure, for the light of God shines on the "**afterward**" of chastening. Afterward comes the fruit, the peaceable fruit of a character like God's.

One of the greatest gains of the passage, in connection with the sufferings of the saints, is in what it says about our response or reaction to these painful experiences. Three are noticed: to despise it (v. 5): to faint under it (v. 5): to be exercised by it (v. 11). The first opening of the subject in verse 5, consisting of a quotation from Proverbs 3: 11 and 12 and thus the main purpose, is to warn against despising or fainting under the chastening. The former is to ignore or treat it lightly: the latter is to be discouraged and cast down by it. To be in line with the Father's purpose in sending chastening, we will give due and prayerful consideration to its meaning and intention. We may never, like Job, come to the knowledge of the hidden origin of the story of our painful experience, but, again like Job, we may reach the blessing purposed, in our receiving its peaceable fruit.

LETTER FROM CROMWELL (1644)

Sir, God hath taken away your eldest son. . . . You know my own trials this way, but the Lord supported me. I remembered that my boy had entered into the happiness we all pant for and live for. There, too, is your precious child, full of glory, never to know sin or sorrow any more. . . . God give you His comfort. You may do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us. Seek that, and you shall easily bear your trial. The Lord be your strength.

THE SYMPATHY OF OUR HIGH PRIEST

J. N. SHEPHERD

WHEN the children of Israel came out of Egypt from under the bondage of Pharaoh we know well the power of the hand of God, which was seen in their deliverance. And God, in His wonderful goodness, undertook not only to bring them out from the house of bondage but also to plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. God's purpose of grace for His people involved a completeness of blessing and His thoughts certainly spanned the distance which lay between Egypt and Canaan: and, in doing so, He was not unmindful of their needs along the desert journey. He knew the waste places, the drought, the scorpions and the serpents, the lack of food and the outlook which would result from the absence of Egypt's fleshpots in a people long steeped in Egyptian civilisation, albeit slavery: He knew, too, the enemies who surrounded their path ahead. So not only did He undertake to lead them in His mercy and to give them the unchanging security of His own wonderful presence with them and the confidence of His guidance whenever they moved, but He made ample provision for every vicissitude of the journey: so that even their clothes did not wax old upon them. But in addition to all, He provided them with a representative person to act for them towards Himself and this person was Aaron. Suitable as he was in very many ways and God-appointed too, he was a poor sinful, failing mortal, like those he represented, indeed, to such a degree that he had to start by making atonement for his own sins first, before acting in any way for God's people.

The picture given to us in Exodus by God is surely a very telling forecast of our dilemma in this world, but as the Scripture teaches, it is simply a shadow when related to our present position: and indeed in Aaron we see the very contrast to our glorious and adorable High Priest who has never been nor ever could be associated with failure.

But oh how needy we are! Used to the characteristics of the world under Satan's rule, we find ourselves when saved by the intervention of God's grace and delivered from its bondage, in a desert in which we are entirely dependent upon the God who has delivered us. And yet how much more sure — indeed how infinitely secure! — is our pathway through this world in dependence upon God, than it ever could be, if we sought to walk here in our own strength.

There is no ground for the young Christian to expect the Christian life stretching out in front of him to be an easy thing. Every indication of God's word implies that persecutions, difficulties, sorrows, even privations may well await him in special measure by reason of his Christian profession, and, in addition, he is not exempt from that which befalls man naturally in the world as a result of sin. It is wonderfully true that if he lives near to God, there are certain things which he will not suffer in common with the world (Exodus 15: 26), but nevertheless disease and death still stalk this world where sinful flesh is found and the Christian is not excluded from their effects. It is also plain that, although some of the

world's types of expenditure are not ordinarily part of the Christian's life, he may have to know poverty in a real sense in this world.

The Christian is a man or woman whose joys are infinite and eternal, centred as they are in the Eternal God, and in reality, his citizenship is in heaven and he is rich beyond computation when his resources are calculated in the heavenly assessment, for is it not said that "all are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's". However, in the meantime, he is living in a world which utterly discounts these things of true value and which may well hate him in relation to his loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. "If the world hate you" the Lord Jesus said, "ye know that it hated Me before it hated you" and again "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world".

And so it is that all his needs, all his problems, all his circumstances and tribulations make him require a representative before God with much greater qualifications than Aaron of old. There is only one Person in the whole universe who has them, and the position of High Priest is one of glory and honour and it is surely a matter for supreme delight to a delivered soul to find that the Person of God's appointment to it is the One whose work alone has delivered him.

When troubles assail us, Satan's mode of attack so frequently seems to be a kind of suggestion to our minds that perhaps God is too infinite and great and high to understand our particular difficulties: but his suggestions will soon be seen in their right perspective when we remember that this blessed One walked the lanes of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet

without sin". Though highly exalted in the glory of God, He is a real Man who has trodden this earth in holy perfection: so that "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities". He knew what it meant to be "wearied with His journey". He is and ever was "over all God, blessed for evermore" but who can know the depths of poverty to which His grace and compassion took Him? As the gospels tell us the precious story of His life here, how familiar does the word "compassions" come to be, and how wonderful it is to realise that His compassions never change or fail and that He feels now for the bereaved as He felt for the widow of Nain and for Jairus and his wife and the household of Lazarus. Is it not blessed to consider that all our affairs are committed into the hands of One who was able to weep in sympathy, here below? It is said of Him "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" this was not a substitutionary act on the cross or we would never have any, but an act of infinitely gracious sympathy by One who knows all about them.

There is not a sigh, beloved Christian reader, which has ever escaped your lips, nor a tear from your eyes which has not found a response in the heart of the One who knows much more about you and your circumstances than you know yourself. He knows why they have come to you, just how long in mercy they are going to be allowed to continue — maybe to bring you to fuller dependence on Himself — and what moments of anguish they have meant. He loves you dearly — did He not purchase you with His own precious blood? — and He will never suffer you to shed a needless tear nor to be tempted above that

which you are able to bear. It may be difficult now to believe it, but, when come to glory, we shall surely be eternally thankful for every experience we have had, of occasions to prove His gracious thought for us in the difficult circumstances and for the way He has brought us through them. Let us never forget that eternity will not present us with opportunities for learning His faithfulness in relation to the needs of life here. "In that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Just as Aaron of old bore in his breastplate the names of the children

of Israel, in like manner, your name is known — and your problem too — dear Christian, and the Lord Jesus Himself carries it upon His loving breast. You may be misunderstood on earth and perhaps misrepresented too, but there are no misunderstandings there. And how perfectly He suits our case, beloved. "He continueth ever." Aaron might and did in fact die, but there is no change in Jesus, there is no change in His wonderful love, in His perfect sympathy, nor now in the office of High Priest which He so gloriously adorns.

GOLDEN GRAIN

Father, to Thee we look in all our sorrows;

Thou art the fountain whence our healing flows.
Dark though the night, joy cometh with the morrow;
Safely they rest who on Thy love repose.

When fond hopes fail and skies are dark before us,
When the vain cares that vex our life increase,
Comes with its calm the thought that Thou art o'er us,
And we grow quiet, folded in Thy peace.

Nought shall affright us, on Thy goodness leaning,
Low in the heart faith singeth still her song.
Chastened by pain, we learn life's deeper meaning,
And in our weakness Thou dost make us strong.

Patient, O heart, though heavy be thy sorrows,
Be not cast down, disquieted in vain;
Yet shalt thou praise Him when these darkened furrows,
Where now He plougheth, wave with golden grain.

F. L. HOSMER 1840-1929.

THE home at Bethany comes before us in John II as a place where the love of Jesus was known. There they knew how to rely on it with natural, simple confidence at every season. Individually the members of the little household are marked out as its objects. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus," as if to teach us that through all the experience of initial serenity, mourning sorrow, dawning hope, and the joy of restoration and reunion, the love of Jesus was there, ordering events, weeping in sympathy, and working the final miracle. The lesson is surely that whatever may be our sorrow, the love of Jesus stands before it, walks beside it, and though there be delay, comes at last — it will unfailingly be true for all His own — as the Resurrection and the Life.

The story begins with the sickness of Lazarus. "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus." This was the brother of that Mary who anointed the Lord, yet his relationship with that illustrious woman did not make him immune from suffering. Further, his sisters sent to Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick". How infinitely blessed to be an object of the love of Jesus, but even this did not provide immunity from sickness. The work of divine love is not to guarantee freedom from suffering, but to make it serve the divine end. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

At first there is no word about the benefit to the sufferers themselves: but when afterwards they reviewed it all, how clearly it would be seen that their own highest good was involved in what served the glory of God. Let us therefore not be hasty

in arriving at a carnal assessment of the sufferings of this present time. Seen from the glorious heights of God's "afterward", their experience of the well-known love of Jesus, coming to its flower and fruit in their sample of life and resurrection with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, was coincident with that which glorified God. It was not indifference which caused Jesus to abide two days still in the place where He was. Rather was it His allowing the circumstances to ripen towards the divine end.

"Not unto death", said the Master, yet Lazarus died, and Jesus said to the disciples plainly that "Lazarus is dead". Death was not the end, but Lazarus' death was necessary to the attainment of that end. The grand end in view in the sickness, suffering and dying of Lazarus was the manifestation of the fact that the power of resurrection and life was visiting this world in the Person of the Son of God. The heart anguish of the bereaved sisters was to give place to the full joy attendant on the resurrecting power of the Son of God. Where the awful power of sin reached its climax in death, where the ultimate power of the devil was seen, just there the glory of God shone out. The Son of God stood before the tomb and cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth." Mighty triumph! The devil defeated! Death annulled! The grave robbed of its victory! The day of mourning turned into the joy of resurrection! What a result from the sickness of Lazarus. What strong consolation for the heart-broken sisters to learn that their suffering had become the occasion of setting forth the glory of their Lord.

Thus the sorrowing saints are en-

larged through the pressure coming on them, for this was the paradox uttered by another sufferer when he said, "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in pressure" (Psalm 4: 1). Through such an experience Paul learned to say, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

The grand revelation of the release of all the sleeping saints from the grip of death was augured by His intervention in love and power, for, "He that believeth in Me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

The end of the Lord on this occasion was to manifest the power which will shortly raise all the sleeping saints and change all the living saints. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

"WITH CHRIST, WHICH IS FAR BETTER"

ERNEST H. LYON

A popular poet and playwright, an agnostic, who lived into the early years of the present century, wrote in one of his poems the following lines:

"We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be,
That no man lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

What a hopeless creed, or lack of creed! Like a jeweller who shows his jewels against a dark foil, let us lay on this dark background the gem of Scripture quoted above. What a contrast the Christian outlook presents! **We know** that a believer to whom death comes is instantaneously "absent from the body, present with the Lord". But we have the same affections and emotions as those who are not believers, and when death comes to one we love,

we cannot but feel keenly the loss to ourselves and others: we are not expected to be Stoics. Yet we "sorrow not as those who have no hope."

But although we may show a brave and even cheerful front to others, we are still inwardly downcast, and we have our lonely hours. Although we may never give expression to our feelings, we may still, in our human frailty, secretly grudge the premature breaking of a precious bond, and grieve over the wrecking of our plans, the blighting of our cherished hopes. If we are to get rid of these depressing feelings, we should dwell on the bliss of those who are "with Christ, which is far better". Scripture does not tell us much about their state, and where we are not told it is idle for us to speculate; but we are told that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him". Certainly,

presence with the Lord excludes altogether the possibility of any so blest wishing to be back in this world of sin and sorrow — there are no unsatisfied longings there.

“Where the saints in glory thronging,

Where they feed on life's blest tree,
There is stilled each earnest longing,
Satisfied our souls shall be.

Safety — where no foe approaches;
Rest — where toil shall be no more;
Joy — whereon no grief encroaches;
Peace—where strife shall all be o'er.

Where deceiver ne'er can enter,
Sin-soiled feet have never trod;
Free — our peaceful feet may venture
In the paradise of God.”

Only as we realise more fully the truth of these lines will we lose our grudging feelings, and at last be able to say in all sincerity: “For ever with the Lord; Amen, so let it be.” How can we possibly grudge to any, no matter how much we miss them, nor how poignant and difficult the circumstances left behind may be, the bliss of being in the Lord's presence?

CORRESPONDENCE

QUESTION: Why do we have the collection at the Breaking of Bread? Is it merely a matter of custom, or does the Word of God give us authority for doing so?

ANSWER: There is no scripture giving directions about the time, place, and manner of taking collections; but since there is a good deal in Scripture about the disposal of money on behalf of the churches, it is a certainty that collections were made, and will have to be made, if these directions are to be carried out. The taking of collections, therefore, has Scriptural authority. When, and how they are taken, ought not to be a matter on which dogmatising is appropriate.

I am not aware of any record of the grounds on which brethren first came to adopt the practice of taking collections on the occasion of the Breaking of Bread. There is little doubt that they were acting on a few principles as follows.

1. 1 Corinthians 16: 2 contains an instruction from Paul that each should lay aside, apparently at

home, a sum proportional to his income for the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and this was to be done on the first day of the week. The first day of the week, therefore, is the time to “lay by”. Since it must be collected together sometime, why not the same day?

2. It was kept away from any public meeting, such as a gospel preaching, so as to put it beyond doubt that the gospel is free.

3. It was thought wrong to accept money from the unconverted. This is not a bad general principle, since contributing money is looked on as part of the fellowship in such a passage as Philippians 1: 5.

The practice is thus a matter of principle, rather than of mere custom. What is surely of much greater importance in the sight of God is to be a liberal giver. “God loveth a cheerful giver.”

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

COLIN CURRY

The Fact

Scripture asserts quite plainly that our Christian faith is empty and valueless unless it is a fact that Christ rose from the dead. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. 15: 17). The truth of the resurrection of Christ is thus a matter of first importance; and it is the intention here to distinguish some of the ways in which it is important.

Though much may be made of the evidences for the resurrection this can be dealt with rather briefly here, bearing in mind the words of our Lord "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed". Nevertheless it is not entirely amiss to draw attention to the external evidences for the resurrection, since scripture itself does this. There is the evidence of the empty tomb and the missing body; and also that of the numerous witnesses, so many indeed that a partial list such as appears in 1 Corinthians 15: 5-8 is adequate, and has been considered so by many experienced and impartial critics. There is also the evidence of a more general kind, the growth of the Church and the indestructibility of the faith of Christians in the early days and later. The early Christian preaching, from the day of Pentecost onward, contained a considerable element of emphasis upon the literal fact of the resurrection of Christ, as well as upon its implications for the hearers. That preaching not only survived, but thrived, despite bitter and organised antagonism; and it did so first in Jerusalem, where the central events on which it was based had taken place. These facts alone imply that there was no evidence available to

the opponents of the message which could be produced to refute the claims of the disciples. "We cannot deny it" was an admission made among themselves, though not openly, by the adversaries of the gospel (Acts 4: 16); and the early parts of the book of Acts present an almost continuous story of the opponents of the disciples baffled by things beyond their control, whereas the disciples of Christ were filled with a confidence and a boldness which could not be suppressed. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4: 20), expresses their attitude as they witnessed to the truth of the risen Lord, and their personal experience of it, by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Proof of His Greatness

The natural and understandable reaction to the suggestion that after death and burial a person should return to life is one of doubt and incredulity. This is something so completely beyond ordinary experience and imagination that the common attitude is one of disbelief. There are many instances in scripture of this kind of attitude. To His disciples the death of our Lord was the end of all hope, and the message of His resurrection, received indirectly, seemed to them as an idle tale. Even in His actual presence "they yet believed not for joy" (Luke 24: 11, 24, 41); and Thomas who missed that first occasion could not be persuaded by the joint testimony of all the others. As the message was declared to outsiders the proclamation of the resurrection was often the point at which impatience and mockery commenced (Acts 17: 32, 26:

24). In the detailed argument in 1 Corinthians 15, it is recognised that to ask how such a thing as resurrection of the body could be, is to ask a baffling and unanswerable question (v. 35, 36). All this is admitted in scripture; what is claimed is plainly a miracle of the first order.

On the other hand scripture makes it clear that, to those who have eyes to see it, the really incredible thing would be that it should **not** have happened. The miracle is exceptional and astounding, and thus difficult to believe. But the Person Who rose from the dead is unique, and His greatness and perfection beyond all description, so much so that Peter affirmed "it was not possible that He should be holden of it (i.e. death)". The impossibility is that He should remain in death, and Peter speaks in an almost contemptuous way of the power of death in the light of His greater power over it. Other scriptures point out the same lesson, among which may be quoted: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10: 17, 18), "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2: 19). The context of this last quotation makes it evident that the Lord referred in these words to His resurrection as the supreme sign of His greatness and glory and the crowning proof of His claims, which had all these evidential qualities to faith, though to unbelief it would still remain a stumbling-block. In this passage the disciples' unawareness of the import of His words at the time is also made clear, as well as His own detailed foreknowledge of events (the three days) and of the thoughts and attitudes of men in relation to them.

It is well to pause and meditate on the glory of the Person Whom God

raised from the dead. Romans 1: 4 tells us that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead", a verse which could also refer to His power to raise the dead shown during His life on earth. It can no longer appear "a thing incredible . . . that God should raise the dead" (Acts 26: 8), when it is appreciated that the Person so singled out and honoured is the eternal Son of God, the Word become flesh, the One Who so perfectly revealed God and honoured Him in the completion of the work which was given Him to do. The marvel is that He should die, not that He should rise again. A deep sense of indebtedness and devotion should replace all sense of doubt when He is appreciated in this way. The confession of Thomas, when face to face with the risen Lord, "My Lord and my God" (John 20: 28), expresses both the correct conclusion to be drawn from His resurrection, and also the proper attitude towards the One Who rose again — one of humble and adoring worship.

The Basis of the Believer's Security and Assurance

One of the ways in which scripture presents our Lord's resurrection is as a seal placed by God upon the perfection of His work upon the cross. It is God's answer to the devoted service of Him Who fulfilled His will even unto death. It is God's opposite assessment of Him to that of men who crucified Him. It is God's clear and open testimony to the adequacy of His atoning sacrifice as a basis for salvation for men. Those who have faith in Christ rely on His sacrificial death for their blessing, and they know that they have every ground for doing so because He has been raised from the dead. They believe on "Him that

raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead", and they know that He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" and so they "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 4: 24, 25; 5: 1).

Verses 13 to 20 of 1 Corinthians 15 make the same points clear in a rather different way. The writer there is concerned to show how much depends on the resurrection of Christ, and he does so by showing what would be lost had He not risen from the dead. There would be no message of value to speak or to hear, so that to engage in preaching would be pointless and time-wasting and to believe what was preached would be a delusion (v. 14). We should remain in our sins, however much we might think otherwise (v. 17). We should have no hope for the future (v. 18). A life of denial of self for Christ's sake would be misguided and of no advantage in any way (v. 19, 30, 32). But in the midst of the passage the clear statement rings out "But now is Christ risen from the dead" and with it comes the confidence that none of these things is lost or valueless. Faith, preaching, and even labour and devotion are "not in vain in the Lord" (v. 58). We are **not** in our sins; those that have fallen asleep in Christ have **not** perished; we as Christians have hope in this life **and** the next. Our faith and hope centre in a living Christ.

The Influence and Incentive of Christian living

"Therefore, . . . be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." This is the concluding sentence of the chapter already frequently quoted. The preceding words have shown that Christ is indeed risen and every enemy of

God will ultimately be subdued. Therefore, it is argued, this knowledge can and should prompt those who know Him confidently to persist in ways that will please Him and be fruitful for Him. Constant devotion, perhaps involving no little effort and patience, can spring from the experience of a link with Him, the living Lord. The Christian's life can be pursued in awareness of His presence, with support and direction for every situation. This is something altogether different from living for an ideal, however high; different too from living according to the high code of teaching of a figure of history, though that may be part of its outcome. Christ is that, but far more too; He is the very life of His people.

The identification of Christ with His people is frequently presented in scripture. It is plainly taught that men are sinful by nature, beyond the possibility of cure, and that death is the only end. That end has been reached in the death of Christ for all who have faith in Him (see Rom. 6). But they possess a new life too, by faith; they are not only dead and buried with Christ but are also "risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead". He died to sin and lives to God (Rom. 6: 10) and they too are called to reckon themselves in the same situation in relation to both.

These statements are made in an unequivocal way; they are true of the person who belongs to Christ. But they are also presented as requiring a correspondence in his manner of living. Romans 6 makes it clear that in Christian baptism a person makes an outward profession that, as Christ has died to sin and lives to God, this too is true of himself in a vital, inward way through his faith in Christ. Hence there is

in baptism an agreement and committal to the responsibilities of being a Christian, i.e. that the old attitudes and actions of sin should and will be out of sight, and that the new life will be seen. "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6: 4). We are called to be "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 11). Awareness of God and all His favour to us, and also of the things which would be for His pleasure in our lives, is now to be our kind of life. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3: 1). The springs of our life will be hidden in Him, Who is our life; though the day of His manifestation will arrive in due course (Col. 3: 4). Meanwhile, the ensuing verses in Colossians 3 leave us in no doubt regarding the very practical attitudes and actions which please our Lord.

The Ground of the Christian's Hope

Amongst the recipients of the first Corinthian letter, some evidently doubted the possibility of bodily resurrection from among the dead (1 Cor. 15: 12) and the fifteenth chapter is the answer to this form of unbelief. The resurrection of Christ provides the evidence that such doubts are groundless. In verses 23 and 24 the resurrection of Christ is referred to as the first of a sequence of events of a like character; the later events in that sequence depend for their accomplishment upon the first and greatest, which has already taken place. The time order in these verses should be noted: "Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His

coming. Then cometh the end. . . ." The Christian's hope, in more senses than one, is enshrined in these verses. That he himself will enter into full and eternal blessing, in body, soul and spirit, is guaranteed by the fact that Christ has already risen. A vast harvest is to follow the firstfruits, when all who are Christ's are to be transformed into His likeness, raised in bodies of glory, and the full results of His death for them upon the cross will at last be achieved. This, according to 1 Thessalonians 4: 14, is as much to be believed and as sure of accomplishment as the other events in the chain which have already taken place, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him". There is surely great comfort and joy to be derived from the expectation which is made so real by these verses.

But the Christian looks with hope to the future not only in the sense that his own highest good will find its realisation there. He cares for the honour of His Lord, and so he looks on to the time when Christ is clearly acknowledged as supreme, when every foe will be under His feet, when death itself, the last enemy, will be destroyed. Then the work He began will be completed in all its phases, so that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15: 28). That time is awaited still, though not with any doubt as to its arrival. Meanwhile "we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2: 8, 9). Those who can see Him there, alive from the dead, have the assurance that the rest of the story will surely find its fulfilment.

THE account of the Burnt Offering in the first chapter of Leviticus gives a clear illustration of the basis upon which the believer is accepted of God — in New Testament language “accepted in the Beloved”. From this chapter we may, therefore, consider our standing, our worship and our service.

The Book of Leviticus opens with the phrase “And the Lord called unto Moses . . .”. The initiative is with God. He makes this revelation to His servant. He speaks to him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, from between the cherubim above the mercy seat as indicated in Exodus 25: 22. This suggests the purpose of His speaking, that men should be brought into relationship with Him and that a basis for worship may be established. It is not God’s voice in creation as in Psalm 19, neither is it the demands of the law as at Sinai (Ex. 19), but rather the voice of Divine Mercy making provision for the failure and weakness of His people. God is calling today in the Gospel (by the Spirit’s power) but it is no longer the shadow, the outline of good things to come, but the good things themselves. Are our ears open?

The offering had to be brought to the **door** of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord (v. 3). This teaches us that only on the ground of an accepted sacrifice can we approach God. Abel knew this and his faith is commended in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The offering had to be without blemish (v. 3, 10). This foreshadows the perfection of the Lord Jesus. The apostle Peter speaks of Him as a “a lamb without blemish

and without spot” and as the One “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 1: 19; 2: 22).

Verse 4 is an important one. The laying of his hand on the head of the offering means identification. The man was in effect saying, “This is **my** offering to be presented to the Lord for **me**.” This corresponds to faith in the individual. Mental assent to the fact that Jesus died is not saving faith.

The verses that follow record how the bullock was slain, the blood sprinkled upon the altar, the parts put in order upon the wood on the fire upon the altar and how the whole was consumed “an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord” (v. 5-9). All this foreshadows the way in which the Lord Jesus accomplished, in every detail, the will of God, His Father, not only in His life, but in His death. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2: 8). Verses 6 and 9 in our chapter seem to emphasise the idea of perfection: everything pleasing to God. The following passages from John’s Gospel set forth this truth:

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me . . . I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

“. . . as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.”

“Father, . . . I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”

“ It is finished.”

(John 10: 17, 18; 14: 31; 17: 4; 19: 30).

Other passages may also spring to mind, but the few selected meet our present purpose. In all this the Lord Jesus is unique. Men of the Old and the New Covenant have pleased God. Enoch pleased God (see Heb. 11: 5) and so ought we, but this is comparative. Perfection is found only in Christ and He alone could express that complete obedience which we find in John's Gospel.

The offering was consumed upon the altar “ an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord ” (v. 17). The faithful Israelite could experience the joy of acceptance before God. The fact that under the old dispensation such joy must inevitably be temporary, does not invalidate the experience. It does, however, serve to remind us of the richer portion which is ours. This is not because we are morally better than the Israelite under the law, but because of the infinite superiority of Christ our sacrifice, “ Who hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour ” (Eph. 5: 2).

In the second part of the chapter (from v. 10 onwards) an offering from the flock or an offering of fowls is permitted. This may suggest differing aspects of the Lord's work. A bullock, for example, may suggest labouring strength and the lamb meek submission, a most fitting symbol of Him Who came as the Lamb of God to die. These offerings also indicate the individuals' varying appreciation of the Lord's work. Happily, the basis of our acceptance is the infinite value to God, the Father, of our Lord's work and not our understanding of it. To Him alone is known the

preciousness of that perfect obedience and of the work at Calvary.

In this context “ accepted ” permits of no comparative. No believer is “ more accepted ” than another. Perhaps this section also reminds us that the death of Christ avails for all. No one is too poor to enter into the blessing.

In our chapter we also read of “ The priests, Aaron's sons ” (v. 5, 7, 8). They represent the Church in its priestly character, the holy priesthood referred to in Peter's first Epistle, whose privilege it is to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2: 5). The apostle clearly intended a contrast between the old dispensation and Christianity. The spiritual sacrifices are the “ fruit of our lips ” (giving thanks to His name) which in the 13th chapter of Hebrews we are exhorted to offer continually. There is no doubt, however, that the priestly character of the church is particularly in evidence when we meet to celebrate the Lord's Supper. We give thanks for the grace which God has shown to us: the theme of our hymns and prayers is the Lord Jesus — the glory of His Person and the greatness of His work.

In relation to our worship, the altar is of significance, the fire upon it, which never went out, is a symbol of God's holiness. “ Our God is a consuming fire ” (Lev. 6: 13; Heb. 12: 29). The sprinkling of the blood (v. 5, 11) is evidence that a sacrifice has been offered, a life laid down. For us it is a reminder of the completeness of the work of Christ, everything being accomplished for the glory of God. Moreover, the altar was “ by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation ” (v. 5). This would suggest that the work of Christ is the basis of our worship. The priest could not enter

the tabernacle without first passing the altar of burnt offering; neither can there be true worship on our part without a realisation of what Christ has done.

The individual's appreciation of the Lord's work is intimately associated with worship, but whether (metaphorically speaking) he brings "a sacrifice of the herd" or simply "one of young pigeons", that which is offered in sincerity and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit is acceptable to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. In these circumstances, no one need be hindered from adding his note of praise.

Before leaving the subject of worship, we should remember that there came a time in the history of Judah when the offering of sacrifices degenerated into a mere formality, so that God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah had to say, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me". Is there not a solemn warning for us in this?

We have so far been considering the Christian's privileges, but it is the responsibility of the Christian company and of the individual to witness for Christ; to make known the greatness of His Person and proclaim His death on Calvary's cross as the basis of acceptance before God. The gospel is the good news of God, the gospel of the glory of Christ (Rom. 1: 1-3; 2 Cor. 4: 4 R.V.). We cannot fulfil this responsibility, collectively or individually, unless our conduct is consistent with our profession. Hence in Ephesians 5: 2 we are instructed to walk in love "as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us . . .". The closing chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, reminds us that in addition to the sacrifice of praise, there is another sacrifice with which God is well pleased, namely doing good

and sharing what we have with others (Heb. 13: 16). The apostle John expresses it thus: "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." A scriptural example of this, is the numerous gifts sent by the Christians at Philippi to the apostle Paul. These voluntary gifts sprang from their love for the apostle. Paul can write of them as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Phil. 4: 18).

Those who have faith in the Lord Jesus can rejoice in their acceptance before God — "accepted in the Beloved". They can draw near to God in worship, having boldness or confidence to "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way . . .". It is important that they should also seek to do those good works which are well pleasing to God. Failure does not affect the Christian's standing or acceptance before God, since the foundation of his acceptance lies outside the sphere of human responsibility. Failure **does** affect the enjoyment of being "accepted in the Beloved" and it hinders worship and mars the witness. Scripture is utterly opposed to the idea that the believer's acceptance permits of license or carelessness in respect of sin. Jude terms this "turning the grace of our God into dissoluteness" (Jude 4 New Translation). We do well to consider Paul's word to Timothy: "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience . . ." (2 Tim. 3: 10). The whole tenor of New Testament teaching is that being taken into the sphere of divine favour, we ought therefore to make our lives and service acceptable to God also. "Let us . . . serve God acceptably and with godly fear" (Heb. 12: 28).

An Address given at Cheltenham 1962

Romans 5: 1, 2; Ephesians 2: 18, 3: 1-21

I WANT to speak of the blessedness of drawing near to God. You will have noticed that in each of the Scriptures read we have the thought of access to God. We have been engaged in this conference with the highest possible truth in the Christian dispensation and I want to say with emphasis that our being formed by the truth does not in the ultimate depend upon the knowledge of the word of God, important as that is; nor does it depend upon Christian fellowship, important as that is; but if we are to really take in the truth and be formed by it, then we must know something of nearness to God. If I were asked for some special word of importance for believers, and especially for young Christians, I would say above all else cultivate personal history with God; nothing can take its place.

There is nothing more blessed than to know God, and what God desires is that we should enjoy His company in intimacy and nearness. On His side everything has been done in order that that might be so. If as Christians we are conscious of distance between ourselves and God, we may be sure that the difficulty lies with us and not with God.

We have all experienced drawing near to God in our need as sinners, but we could not have drawn near to God had He not first moved towards us in grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. God has drawn near to us, and He has spoken to us in wonderful compassion, having in mind that we should reciprocate His love and know the blessedness of drawing near to Him.

Nearness to God is an essential if the secrets of divine counsel which are engaging us in Ephesians, are to be known. There are two outstanding things which eventuate from nearness to God. First, a spirit of absolute simplicity; there is no room for self-esteem, self-aggrandisement, self-seeking, or self-importance in any person who is consciously near to God. In the presence of God we are given to know that pre-eminence belongs to Christ. We may have known this as a text of Scripture, but it becomes spiritual substance as we learn it in reality in the presence of God. We realize that no flesh can glory there! The flesh can glory in every sphere except the presence of God, but it cannot glory there. Thus in the presence of God we learn to be emptied of self-importance, and to appreciate that all greatness and all glory belongs to Christ.

The second thing we learn is that nearness to God is an absolute necessity if we are to understand that which He would communicate to us in the power of the Spirit. In the 11th chapter of Matthew's Gospel we have a profound verse in relation to the knowledge of the Father and the Son, and immediately following that wonderful pronouncement (which is like a scintillating jewel set in the gold of Scripture, shining out in all its preciousness and glory in relation to the Person of the Son as known by the Father and the revelation of the Father by the Son) the Lord Jesus says, "Come unto Me . . . and learn from Me" as the preposition should read (vv. 28, 29). Does not this indicate that the im-

port of that wonderful verse was to be learned in nearness to Christ? And one is conscious as one speaks that there must be nearness to God if we are to get the full benefit of what the Holy Spirit would bring before us in the Ephesian epistle.

Having said that by way of preface I now refer to the three Scriptures which we have read — the first in the epistle to the Romans. I have purposely referred to Romans because it has always appealed to me as being a necessary preparation for the understanding of the Ephesian epistle. The epistle to the Romans does not develop the truth of the mystery, or the truth as to Christ and the Church, but what it shows is the settling from God's side of every moral question brought in by sin. Now I make the point definitely and earnestly, that there can be no understanding or enjoyment of the deep things of God if there are moral matters outstanding between our hearts and God. God is holy, and if He has been pleased, as I hope we may see as we proceed, to introduce us into the secret of His eternal thoughts, and has given us to enjoy the outpouring of His love in Christ, in doing that He has not surrendered one whit of His holiness. It is essential that the young brethren particularly should consider this important point, indeed both young and old should realize that there must be the complete settling of moral matters if there is to be the enjoyment in nearness of the presence of God, and the understanding of spiritual things.

Hence the epistle to the Romans is of great importance. In the earlier chapters we see how the whole state of man in his degradation is taken up and settled from the divine side. The basis of that transaction is the precious blood of Christ, and in consequence of the value that God sets

upon the precious blood, all that history of moral breakdown in which we all have been involved, has been dealt with from the divine side, and there is the possibility of each of us knowing what it is to be in absolute peace with God. There is no need for one to apologize for this simple note; it is dangerous in any company to take too much for granted. It is impossible to understand, or to enjoy Ephesian truth, if we have not settled peace with God. We need to grasp as it were what God has said as to His valuation of the work of Christ; we need to embrace by faith what has been accomplished through His precious death, and to see that everything has been settled, not according to my need or apprehension, but according to God's complete satisfaction and glory, and that involves the valuation that God Himself sets upon the precious blood of Jesus. We are "justified by His blood" (Romans 5: 9); that is the basis of our justification. We are "justified freely by His grace" (Romans 3: 24); that is the way in which God has moved towards us as the Justifier. Liberated we may say in His love by the work of Christ He can now justify us freely by His grace.

But we are also "justified by faith" (Romans 5: 1). The testimony given by God in His word in relation to the work of Christ is to be taken hold of in faith; we believe what God has said. In the gospel God declares His complete satisfaction in the work of Jesus, we accept it by faith, and we have peace with God. The past is all cleared in the death of Christ. The future is bright, for a justified person can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5: 2).

Later in the chapter we find that a reconciled person rejoices in God Himself, but as justified we can re-

joice in hope of the glory of God, for when the glory shines upon us it can only reveal the work of God. We are absolutely cleared of every stain of sin, and there is nothing left which would hinder us from being in absolute peace with God. And then if the past is all clear, and the future is all bright, the present is most blessed, we stand in the favour of God; "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand". We stand in the enjoyment of the

free movements of God's love in Christ, the power of which the Spirit is here to make good in our souls.

Now the ground is cleared for us to move on to what we have brought before us in the Ephesian epistle, where we see how God has acted in order to bring into evidence His own eternal purpose of love, and the blessings we are brought into have in view our enjoyment of and response to these great thoughts of God.
(to be continued)

THE TRUE WORSHIP

J. S. BLACKBURN

6. THE PSALMISTS' JOY IN GOD

A study of the directions in the Law for the conduct of Israel's worship has provided a starting-point in previous chapters; but where can a glimpse be obtained of the spirit in which, even though only in an ideal case, these directions were carried out? Much of the worship of the ancient world was licentious in the extreme. By contrast, Israel was called to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Did this mean that their worship was morose, sombre, gloomy and dismal? Such a glimpse is obtainable in the Psalms, and it will be found that nowhere in Scripture is joy in God given such exuberant, even ecstatic, expression as in the psalmists' dilations on the temple worship. In "Reflections on the Psalms" C. S. Lewis has given this personal witness: "The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance. I am not saying that this is so pure or so profound a thing as the love of God reached by the

greatest Christian saints. . . . But I am not comparing it with that, I am comparing it with the merely dutiful 'church-going' and laborious 'saying our prayers', to which most of us are, thank God not always, but often, reduced. Against that, it stands out as something astonishingly robust, virile, and spontaneous; something we may regard with an innocent envy and may hope to be infected by as we read. . . . It has all the cheerful spontaneity of a natural, even a physical, desire. It is gay and jocund. They are glad and rejoice. Their fingers itch for . . . the lute and the harp — wake up, lute and harp — let's have a song, bring the tambourine, bring the 'merry harp with the lute', we're going to sing merrily and make a cheerful noise." There are, as always, many contrasts, as well as parallels, between all this and the true worship, but let us agree that such joy in God is infectious, and pray that we may catch the infection.

It will now be scarcely necessary to point out that all the details of physical and material accompaniments in and through which they could joy in God and so be moved to enter His house as worshippers, have their counterpart in the spiritual things of Christian worship. Harp, lute, and psaltery are replaced by making melody in our hearts to the Lord. He no longer dwells in temples made with hands. His house is the church; there His Name is set, and His people assembled in His Name compose it.

The three chief distinctions to be made are that a finished redemption was still in the future: that God was not fully revealed: and that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. All these awaited the greatest of all events, the coming and the sacrifice of the Son. When the Psalmists put into words their joy in God, it was joy in Jehovah, for only in this Name had God thus far revealed Himself. Now, in Christianity, God is known and worshipped as the Father; His people are in settled relationship with Him on the ground of a finished redemption; and the Holy Spirit has been given and is the power for such worship. Nevertheless, the Psalmists' joy in Israel's God, Jehovah, is a very lovely thing and worthy to be noted in more detail. If in Christianity we have seen and believed the supreme tokens of the love of God, there is but greater reason to joy in Him.

None of their needs is so pressing as the hunger and thirst they feel for God. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (42: 1, 2). None of their petitions is so urgent as their cry for Himself, because this experience is in the highest degree joyous. "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them

lead me: let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy" (43: 3, 4). The metrical version has seized the idea in a most attractive way: "Then will I to God's altar go, to God my chiefest joy."

This delight in God led to a corresponding delight in His House, the Temple, and this finds frequent expression in the Psalms. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple" (27: 4). It is in the Lord's House that His "fair beauty" is seen. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy House; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures" (36: 7-9).

It can hardly be supposed, however, that when they sing about the House of the Lord their thoughts and aspirations were exhausted by the contemplation of the Temple at Jerusalem. When in Psalm 23 David sings: "And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever," he surely did not mean that the Temple would be his everlasting home. He was in fact coming very near to Israel's version of the Father's house of many mansions promised by the Lord Jesus to His disciples in John 14: 2. Similarly, as we read the Psalms and catch the infection, there is awakened within us a kind of blend, compounded of desire after God fully revealed as the Father; desire for renewal and intensification of the experience of His presence in His house, the Church; and also of longing for the everlasting enjoyment of Himself in His home in heaven.

The setting of some Psalms symbolises in a very striking way the

fact that this joy in God moves to worship and permeates worship. An essential element in the system of priesthood and sacrifice which was Israel's worship was the command that three times a year "all your males shall appear before Me in Zion". At these seasons every man in Israel made the journey to Jerusalem to appear before Jehovah in Zion. These were the feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Everywhere throughout the land at these times would be found joyous bands of pilgrims journeying to appear in Zion. Many would have previous experiences of the joys of Zion, and were longing and thirsting for a renewed experience of the courts of the Lord. Such a Psalm is Psalm 84.

Its three sections, marked by Selah, contain three beatitudes. The first section (vv. 1-4) shows the happiness of being in God's house: the second (vv. 5-9), the blessedness of experience on the way to His house: and the third (vv. 9-12), the incomparable good of trusting in the Lord. Once again the metrical version has seized the feeling: "How lovely is Thy dwelling-place, O Lord of Hosts to me." Soul, heart and flesh sing for joy (R.V.) unto the living God. All this is centred on the altar. There the weak and defenceless find a home. The place of sacrifice is the place of safety. Though the way there may be a vale of tears, faith makes it a well, and they go from strength to strength whose strength is in the Lord. It has been thought that the meaning of verse 5 is "Blessed is the man . . . in whose heart are the highways (to Zion)". It will be worth while to pause at this point and allow the significance of this beatitude to make its full impact. It is all a question of what is in the heart. In this case there is a heart set on the road to Zion's

worship. How has this come about? The answer is that his treasure is there, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6: 21).

To Israelites who had fallen far from the position of the singer in Psalm 84, the Lord addresses the revealing words "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15: 8). It is sobering to realise how near we all often come to the condition when these words are literally true of us. For the writers of these Psalms, their joy in God was their treasure, and therefore their hearts were seeking Him, and therefore their feet were in the way of worship. How can this joy in God be increased? For every true believer experiences, though in tiny measure, joy in God: the question is not how to create, but how to increase it.

One view of the first five chapters of the Epistle to the Romans sees them as the conducting of a soul from a false joy in God in 2: 17 to a true joy in God in 5: 11. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of (or joy in) God" (Romans 2: 17). This is all brought to nothing. In its place comes justification by faith and the love of God so that "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5: 11). These thoughts lead us to believe that learning of God, His wrath against sin, His righteousness to justify, His grace to plan our blessing through Christ, His forbearance for the remission of sins, are among the means whereby true joy in God is increased.

In the Psalms themselves, it is often previous experience of seeing the beauty of the Lord in His house which is the source of desire for a renewing of it. "My soul thirsteth for Thee . . . to see Thy power and

glory, so as I have seen Thee in the Sanctuary" (63: 1, 2). "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude who kept holyday" (42: 4). Thus every experience of the joy of the Lord is a stimulus to seek it increasingly.

"The highways to Zion" are no longer earthly roads by which a sanctuary is approached. For us they represent a spiritual preparation for worship, but it ever remains true, understood in this way, "Blessed is the man . . . in whose heart are the highways to Zion", and these pages only serve their purpose insofar as they help towards this end.

MOTIVES

T. S. DAVISON

(2 Cor. 5: 1-11, 14-15)

Death and Judgment

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9: 27). Such is the solemn statement of the Word of God. A large proportion of unbelievers, although unable, of course, to deny the fact of death, question its significance as the penalty of sin.

But what of the believer's attitude to death and judgment? With regard to death, hear the ringing note of assurance in the words of the Apostle Paul, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (v. 1). While still on earth, inhabiting a frail and mortal body, the believer looks on with longing to that heavenly scene of eternal life, and light, and love, when these bodies of humiliation shall have been fashioned by our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, into bodies of glory, like unto His own glorious body (Phil. 3: 20, 21). Then indeed we shall be clothed upon with that eternal and heavenly house spoken of in these verses, for we shall be with Christ and like Him for eternity.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

In the meanwhile, while present in the body, and hence absent from the Lord, the Christian's pathway through the wilderness is one of faith, and not of sight (v. 7), with the certainty that should the Lord, in His perfect wisdom and love, see fit to terminate that pathway by death, he will be absent from the body and present with the Lord. This is a most blessed prospect, but in the verses under consideration is linked with the revelation of that matter of solemn import, the Judgment Seat of Christ, where every believer must be manifested, and shall "receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done whether they be good or bad" (v. 10). In view of this, the apostle declares "we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to Him" (v. 9 N.T.). In other words, he lived with that coming day in view—and so should every believer. While the person of the believer can never come into judgment (John 5: 24) his responsible pathway will undoubtedly come under the discriminating eyes of the Lord, Who sees every motive, thought, word and action in its true character, and will

manifest His judgment thereon, with consequent reward (or loss, as the case may be) for every one of His own. This is surely a blessed consideration, when viewed in the light of the grace and the glory of God. When that great moment arrives every believer, as the fruit of the purpose and the grace of God, and the work of Christ, will be bearing Christ's likeness, will have left behind for ever everything pertaining to the flesh, and will see his own pathway in the unsullied light of the presence and the holiness of God, and will adoringly acquiesce in the righteous judgment of the Lord.

The Terror of the Lord

It is evident that at this juncture the thoughts of the Spirit-inspired apostle were directed to that other unspeakably solemn scene depicted in Revelation 20: 11-15, where the unsaved dead from the whole course of human history stand before the great white throne, and are "judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20: 12). Thus he is constrained to say, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (v. 11). Obviously the contemplation of that final judgment, with its unescapable issue of eternity in the lake of fire, proved a most powerful motive in his ceaseless service in the Gospel. We might well challenge ourselves as to how far this motive affects us today as we survey the godless, perishing millions around us. If it were in power in our hearts it would surely prove an antidote to anything approaching indifference or apathy in seeking the salvation of the lost.

The Love of Christ

But the terror of the Lord was not the only motive which energised the apostle, for presently he says "for

the love of Christ constraineth us" (v. 14). The terror of the Lord, and the love of Christ, might seem to fleshly or superficial judgment to be, as motives for action, utterly opposed and mutually exclusive. But seen in the context of these verses they show themselves to be, in fact, complementary and mutually supporting.

The love of Christ brought Him, the Living One, into a world of universal spiritual death to die for all, in order that those that live, in consequence of His death and resurrection, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again. This love, known by faith and enjoyed in the soul in the power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells the believer, becomes the principal motive of all true Christian living and service, whether in the Gospel towards the lost, or in the home circle of the House of God. It was the loss of this inner motive, called by the Lord "thy first love", which took away so much of the real value, in His all-seeing eyes, of the otherwise praiseworthy activities of the assembly at Ephesus (Rev. 2: 4), and proved to be the beginning of all subsequent declension in the responsible history of the Church.

The Last Days

The portion of Scripture we have thus briefly considered was written in the early days of the Church, and was doubtless designed by the Spirit of God, through the inspired penman, to meet conditions then existing among the saints at Corinth in particular, and in the Church generally. Almost 2,000 years have passed since then, and evil in the world and in the profession of Christianity has ripened to an appalling extent. There can be no reasonable doubt, in the light of

world events, and the Laodicean character of Christian profession generally, that we are living in the closing moments of the history of the true Church on earth. If, therefore, the verities of death and judgment,

the Judgment Seat of Christ, the terror of the Lord, and the love of Christ were "meat in due season" for the saints in the first century, how much more are they vitally necessary to us today.

CORRESPONDENCE

Captain Ronald Oliver writes from Purley —

You state that the priest's true work is to offer sacrifices. This I presume to be a work Godward. But the Aaronic priests had also a service manward — "To bless in His name for ever" (1 Chron. 23: 13). This also appears, e.g. in Numbers 6: 23-27. The Levites too in their service had functions both Godward and manward (see Deut. 10: 8, 33: 10).

My first question is "Has this manward function of the Old Testament priests and Levites any counterpart now?" Then, as regards what you say on pp. 99 and 100 about children and worship, do I understand aright that you disapprove of "Prayers" at the beginning of the day's work at school, and, for that matter, in the armed forces, where a hymn such as "All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice" is sung, and a simple prayer uttered? It may be illogical but I can't help thinking such an acknowledgment of God may in some way be pleasing to Him, and usable by Him and not fall hopelessly under the condemnation of Proverbs 15: 8: "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight."

And what about the young children of Christian parents? They are not, as I understand it, regenerate, but are we to say therefore that they

should not be taught from their earliest days to regard the Lord Jesus as their shepherd, and to make known their simple petitions to their heavenly Father?

I feel that these are profound matters, which God has not been pleased fully to reveal to us. They are in the realm of "unconvenanted mercies". And I am not sure you are right in writing off "unregenerate worship" as definitely as you do.

The Author replies —

It is suggested that the series on "The True Worship" (this letter makes reference to chapter 4, "The Priesthood of Believers") is in complete agreement with the comments made. There is, of course, a considerable difference of emphasis, since the former concentrates on an attempt to see unencumbered the central, essential, function of priesthood. It would perhaps obscure this purpose if matters in themselves of great importance, yet not central to this particular theme, were explained in detail.

That the priests blessed the people is abundantly clear from the passages quoted, but consideration of these passages hardly suggests that such blessing was the central function of the priesthood. At this point, a reference to the Melchisedic priesthood is appropriate. This was touched on in the chapter on "The Bible Words and their Meaning"

(pp. 68, 69). The pattern of the Melchisedec priesthood is Blessing, in the two senses that Melchisedec blessed Abraham, and also blessed God, and Christ will fulfil this pattern in His millennial reign. Through Him, the Priest upon His throne (Zechariah 6: 13) will flow God's full blessing for man and the earth. This is perhaps the most important way in which there is a counterpart to the manward function of priesthood. On page 97 it is noted that the present spiritual priesthood will engage in "prayer, sympathy and intercession". Is this the channel by which manward blessing from God flows through the New Testament priesthood? The prayers of saints are golden vials full of odours, a distinctly priestly metaphor (Revelation 5: 8).

On the subject of what the letter calls "unregenerate worship", I certainly do not disapprove of "Prayers" for and by children in the home or at school, nor by members of the armed forces. I would not think it worth while to start a campaign against calling such "Prayers" worship; but when engaged in the attempt to see what is the true worship, it seems right to point out that to call such "Prayers" worship represents a dilution of the word we are seeking to understand. The point of view will be made clearer by another reference to an earlier chapter. "That there is a worship other than the true worship is witnessed by the quotation from John 4: 22. To the Samaritan the Lord said, 'Ye worship ye know not what'. The scriptures do accord the name worship to something . . . quite apart from the true worship".

I am thankful for the comments, because they help to remove misunderstanding.

Another correspondent writes —

I wonder if you might give a little guidance on the practical working out of these truths in our Christian life and testimony. I know that much of this must always be a matter of individual conscience before the Lord but it is in this sphere that many of us are perhaps not so clear. For myself, as a teacher, I fully agree with your reference to so-called worship in school, but how should I act in relation to it? In my school the head takes full responsibility for morning prayers — sometimes we may be asked to read the scripture portion — but no more. One is glad to say that she presents the Word of God as God's Word and shows due reverence to the Lord. As far as it goes most of what is said and done is sound. I feel that as far as public witness before the children and teachers is concerned, I cannot do otherwise than join in with sincerity. If I were to withdraw, I would be alongside the few people like Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., who don't allow their children to attend. This would be no help to witnessing personally to the Lord and the truth. I wonder if you agree? This question of mine could no doubt be multiplied with each different walk of life, but I am sure that it is these questions where guidance and discussion can be so helpful.

The author replies —

I hope the previous reply has cleared up the evident ambiguity on school prayers. I wholeheartedly agree that it is an essential part of our witness to join in such prayers with sincerity, and would indeed be sorry if what was written gave the appearance of discouraging this.

7. THE FATHER AND THE SON

AT this point we must recall to mind the Saviour's conversation with the woman of Samaria in John 4, in which is found His central teaching on worship. Hitherto we have lingered on verses 20 to 22. The worship "in this mountain" and "at Jerusalem" were by Him compared and contrasted with that new worship to which He was directing her thoughts. For us also, in previous chapters, the systems of priesthood and sacrifice in which these two traditions of worship consisted have provided pictures by which, when illuminated by His Spirit, we approach an understanding of the true worship. Within the framework thus provided, several features of the true worship have become clearer to us. Nevertheless we must now return to that one great and simple characteristic which it is here the Lord's concern to present. Three times the later verses refer to this fact, that the true worship is the worship of **the Father**, and His quest is for such worshippers. "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

In such words as these, "the hour cometh," the Lord Jesus introduces things which heaven and earth, men and angels, should stop to consider. "Father, the hour is come" He said, when the hour of His cross drew near.

The hour of the cross is past, though never to be forgotten. The hour in which we live is the hour in which the Father is seeking worshippers.

The true worshippers worship the Father, and this we shall consider in some detail. But what of the Son, who uttered these words? What shall be done unto the Man whom the king delighteth to honour? In the following chapter of John's Gospel there is light on this question. The Father has made certain dispositions "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent Him" (John 5: 23). To the same effect is another passage which has already yielded us instruction; it presents the worship of heaven, where they say, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5: 13). Two persons are here distinguished yet connected as the joint object of heaven's worship. Indeed the purpose of this part of the vision is to show that the Lamb who was slain is now sharing the honours due only to God. "He that sits on the throne" is the subject of the Revelation, chapter 4. He is the Creator. The seven Spirits of God ever burn before His throne. As in Isaiah's vision, the seraphim ceaselessly adore Him. By Him and for His pleasure were all things created. The person thus presented (although it is not the idiom of the Revelation so to name Him), is the Father. In chapter 5 there is introduced "in the midst of the throne," and sharing the honours accorded to it, a Lamb fresh from the slaughter. The person thus presented is the Son, and when, in the vision they bring their worship to "Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," they are ful-

filling the divine imperative of John 5: 23; they are honouring the Son even as they honour the Father.

What moves the dwellers in heaven to worship? It is the appearance before their gaze of the Lamb, bearing the marks of His passion, which leads them unerringly to worship the Father and the Son; and this should surely prepare us for the fact that the contemplation of Christ in the Lord's Supper, where the loaf and the cup are to His people as the marks of His passion, can only rightly lead to worship, the worship of the Father, and of the Son joined with Him in the place of supreme honour.

Returning to John 4 verse 23 is central to the whole study in which we are now engaged: "the true worshippers worship the Father." First, let us notice the **contrast** intended by the introduction of this Name. It is the real essence of the contrast between Old and New Testaments, between Judaism and Christianity. It must be obvious to all that the Names under which God has revealed Himself to His chosen saints form a subject of the highest importance and interest. It is impossible to read the Scriptures dealing with these names without seeing that they mark the stages of a progressive self-revelation of Himself by God, and that the knowledge of God imparted to the saints in the names themselves was in the highest degree strengthening, comforting, and sustaining for their faith. The key verses are Exodus 6: 2 and 3: "And God spake unto Moses and said unto him, 'I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of El Shaddai, but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them'." The account of the fuller revelation to Moses is found in Exodus 33: 18 to 34: 8: "And (Moses) said, I beseech Thee,

show me Thy glory. . . . And Jehovah said, Behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand, while I pass by: and I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back . . . but My face shall not be seen . . . and Jehovah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah . . . and Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." Pondering these two quotations, it is plain that although each name when revealed was sufficient for the faith of the saints receiving it, there is nevertheless an immense accession of blessing and privilege associated with each revelation. The idea of progress is unmistakable. The revelation of the name of Jehovah was a great and glorious advance on the revelation of the name of El Shaddai, yet the narrative contains implicitly the fact that even this revelation was not final: "Thou shalt see My back: My face shall not be seen."

A difficulty is presented by the frequent occurrence of the name Jehovah in the Bible narrative prior to Exodus 6, and in particular by Genesis 4: 26: "then began men to call on the name of Jehovah." This is true even of the Abraham story. These earlier occurrences of the name of Jehovah can only mean that Moses in writing the story, used the name he knew without intending to imply that the name was known and understood in these earlier times.

The name El Shaddai is introduced in Genesis 17: 1, and its meaning emphasizes the **power** of God for provision or destruction. The name Jehovah is proclaimed in Exodus 34: 6 and 7, and is a great step forward since it adds truth about the

character of God. He is merciful and gracious, forgiving transgressions, but visiting iniquity. When, however, we come to the New Testament, these names are entirely superseded, and never occur except in quotations. They are indeed so far outshone by the revelation of the Name which awaited no less an event than the coming of the Son, that like the stars in the sunshine they vanish from sight. God is one, and nothing made known in the earlier names is lost or absent from the revelation made by God the Son when He said to the Father, "I have disclosed Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me." Neither the worship of El Shaddai nor that of Jehovah was the true worship. The true worship only became possible with the coming of the Son, revealing the Father, imparting His Spirit, and seeking those who would worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

The word "true" is in itself a certain confirmation of the finality of the revelation of the Father. In this Gospel of John, apart from the expression "the true worshippers," there are four examples of its use: the true Light (1: 9): the true Bread (6: 32): the true Vine (15: 1): the true God (17: 3). In these examples the word signifies the substance in contrast with the shadow: the final rather than the temporary: the complete instead of the partial. In each case what is of Israel (including John Baptist) and therefore partial, shadowy, and incomplete, stands in contrast with what Christ has brought: and in the last and greatest is the final and complete revelation of God as the Father in distinction from the partial revelations of Himself under His Old Testament names.

This brings us to dwell on the **content** or meaning of the name of Father. In it is disclosed the last secret of the depths of God, never to

be superseded, never to be outshone, for it is the light that shines in the eternal home of God. In this name of glory we learn, not only God's power, as in El Shaddai, not only His character, as in Jehovah, but the last secret, which is that His essential nature is a relationship of love. That relationship is primarily between the Father and the Son, but such a revelation offers the gift of relationship with God to men. Men are not to be only in covenant relations with God, but "to as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God" (John 1: 12).

It would be natural to feel astonishment at the fact that when, in the progress of divine revelation the hour has come to represent in a word, in a name, the essential nature of the eternal God, that word, that name, should be found lying at hand, and well known to men. There is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard. Even when the Holy Scriptures are to be translated into some barbarous tongue presenting all kinds of difficulty to the translator, the word required to represent the most profound of truths, the essential nature of God, the word "Father" is always familiar, always available, always understood. Further reflection enables us to see that such surprise is in fact inverting the truth. Known unto God are all His ways from the beginning. He did not wait for the need to find the word. Ephesians 3: 14 and 15, in a less familiar translation reads, "I bow my knees unto the Father, of whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named." When God, as yet unrevealed, came to create man, He did so in His own image and likeness. An essential element in the image and likeness of God is that He implanted in man's nature a relationship which was the image and like-

ness of His own. In man's nature is written this relationship of love, fatherhood, and therefore he possesses the name to describe it. The same considerations apply to that other relationship of love which had a place in the heart and counsel of God, the Man and the Bride. The truth is that in these relationships and the names for them, established by God in the beginning, are the very patterns of eternal truth. It remains true also that the things of God knoweth no man; only when the Spirit came was the meaning of these relationships and names lifted into the new dimension.

It is then consciously to the Father, by the Spirit, that the true worship is addressed by His children; and nothing short of this is the true worship. In Him is the source of that river of love which has flowed by Calvary. Bound up in the same

bundle of life with the Father and the Son the saints begin the worship which will never end.

Where shall words be found of the quality and power to open the understanding and kindle the heart to a real involvement in this great matter? In a story of His resurrection, the Saviour accomplished just this for His disciples. "He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24: 45) and His words made their hearts burn within them while He talked with them. In John 4 also we have been listening to His voice, and this is sufficient, if heard aright, to open our understanding and kindle our hearts in response to the Father's quest. To His own also He says, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. 2: 12).

ACCESS TO GOD

F. A. HUGHES

(Continued from previous issue)

Romans 5: 1, 2 Ephesians 2: 18; 3: 1-21

IN our second Scripture we have the wonderful statement, that we "have access by one Spirit unto the Father." We have access to the Father and we are made fellow citizens of the household of God. It is a blessed thing surely to have conscious access to the grace of God, but it is a most wonderful thing to have access to where God dwells, and to know Him in the intimacy of "Father." We so easily take these names upon our lips without due consideration of the import of them. How easy it is to speak to Him and say "Father!" How many thousands in Christendom

take those words upon their lips — "Our Father!" Do we really know the blessedness of having access to God, and know Him in all the intimacy of the love that He has towards us as Father? The actual verses are a reference to the way in which the middle wall of partition has been broken down between Jew and Gentile, and both have been brought into this one way of access to God by the Spirit. The whole Godhead is engaged in that verse. There are many verses in Scripture in which we get the complete Godhead, and here we have the Godhead concerned in this wonderful

matter of our knowing what it is to be in the enjoyment of the intimacy of the Father's presence. If divine Persons are so interested in this matter, ought not we to be responsive to their interest? Ought we to allow these things to be mere texts of Scripture? Ought we to allow them to be a kind of special vocabulary and conversation, or are we desirous of knowing the reality of enjoying access to God as Father? In the 20th chapter of John, when the Lord Jesus was about to leave this world, where He had been rejected, He said: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (v. 17), and the Ephesian epistle seems in very large measure to be in accord with that utterance, for in the prayers of the apostle we have "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (3: 14), and "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1: 17).

I am confining my remarks to knowing Him as Father, as in union with Christ, in that eternal love in which the Son ever dwells, and which is available to us now, as we have access into His presence. It is something that Moses knew nothing about, great saint of God as he was; it is something that Abraham did not know; it is something that the prophets of the Old Testament did not know; it is that which has been reserved for this dispensation, that we should have access to the very presence of God Himself as Father, and to know Him in that relationship. What does it mean to know God as Father? In Matthew's Gospel we read: "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of" (6: 8). It is said in that gospel that "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (10: 30). Then also, not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge; and all that we need is under the bounte-

ous hand of the Father. But that is but one way in which we can know the Father.

God is said in Scripture to be the Father of compassions (2 Cor. 1: 3, N. Trans.); every ray of true love and sympathy found its origin in the eternal heart of God. It is the province of the very babes of Christianity to know the Father. John says of the babes that they "have known the Father," and in knowing the Father they have been brought to the source of love itself. Love had its origin in the bosom of the Father; what a blessed thing that is! We may have to deplore the absence of love in some circles ("the love of many shall wax cold") but as having access to the Father, we have been brought to the warmth and joy of divine love for our present enjoyment.

He is said to be the Father of glory. Are we seeking glory in this world? There is a glory in this world. When the devil tempted the Lord, he showed to Him not only the kingdoms of the world, but their glory. There is a glory in connection with this world, but it is a passing one and it is a challenging one; it is a glory that challenges the glory of God, for the god of this world is the enemy of God. Every true ray of glory comes from God the Father, lighting up our affections with the splendour of a glory that will never be tarnished, a glory that is eternal and which we are going to share in the company of Jesus throughout an eternal day. It is to be known now as we have access to the Father, the source of all.

He is also the Father of lights. James tells us that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (1: 17). So many things

change in this world. Thank God there is one sphere in which there is no change, no variableness, no shadow of turning; all is glory, all is light, ineffable light; no shadow there at all. It is unchanging, eternal, and it is available to us now as we have access to the Father, "The Father of lights."

One further thought: He is the Father of spirits. Sometimes we may forget that we have spirits. How often we say "body, soul and spirit;" the Scripture says "spirit, soul and body" (1 Thes. 5: 23). We are so apt to think more of our bodies than of our spirits, but God is concerned with our spirits. He is not unmindful of the needs of our bodies as we have already seen from Matthew's Gospel; but He is dealing also with our spirits. As the Father of spirits He would by His word purify our inward motives in order that our spirits might be more responsive to the Holy Spirit, that divine Person here — so sensitive, so sensible too, of all that is necessary in each one of us, if we are to enjoy the things of God. The holy, sensitive Spirit of God indwells us, and yet oftentimes, through the allowance of the flesh, through the allowance of that which is contrary to the will of God, we grieve the Spirit, and are not able to enter into the deep things of God. Knowing the blessedness of "access to the Father," let us seek to be found "in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live" (Heb. 12: 9).

In the last Scripture we read we have the thought of access into the secrets of God. "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Eph. 3: 11, 12). These eternal secrets were hidden in Old Testament days. (The prophets mention-

ed in the 3rd chapter of Ephesians are New Testament prophets). This is something that was hidden in God, something not previously revealed, but which waited for the dispensation in which we live. Think of the dignity of that; think of God keeping this secret. It is not something that He thought of in this dispensation; it was in the mind and heart of God before the foundation of the world. He made much known to the saints in other dispensations; He made known His Name with its attendant glory; He made known His will; He gave to them many promises, and the light of the coming kingdom; but there was one wonderful secret that God kept, and He kept it for the day in which we are found. Paul says "that I should preach among the Gentiles (that is ourselves) the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery . . . hid in God" (v. 8, 9). The unsearchable riches of Christ, something beyond human ken, something that we are absolutely dependent upon the Holy Spirit to lead us into. God has been pleased to open His storehouse, He has made known the wonderful secrets of His heart, and He gives us to see that they are all centred in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is "to head up all things in the Christ" (Eph. 1: 10, N. Trans.).

What a profitable occupation it would be for the young men and women to study the Scriptures and to search out how often the thought of "all things" stands related to Christ, and then seek help to make it a very personal matter! The woman in the fourth chapter of John, said, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things" (v. 25). But there came a moment, the Lord having dealt with her

moral condition, when she said "come, see a Man, which told me all things . . . is not this the Christ?" (v. 29). And it is a wonderful thing, beloved brethren, when we get into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Revealer of secrets, for He will not only reveal to us the secrets of our own hearts, but as the One to Whom the Father has already committed "all things" (John 3: 35), He will bring us into the enjoyment of the secrets of God! The Lord Jesus Christ came into this scene freighted with the knowledge of them; He came to earth to make them known, "that we might share His joys."

How blessedly He walked here! "He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." He trod that lonely pathway. He was bereft of everything. His precious body alone was left to Him, and He gave that for us, in order that the love of God might be known and that we might have present access into the secrets of divine love.

How wonderful it is to get over to God's side of matters! How much Christ means to us! Our forgiveness, our justification, our peace with God, our reconciliation, our being conformed to His image

in the coming day, all these show how essential Christ is to us; but how absolutely essential Christ is to God! Everything for the glory of God depends upon Him. There could be no making known of the secrets of the heart of God were it not for the Incarnation, for in Him in holy manhood have been made known to us the secrets of the heart of God. God has in mind that we should be brought into the enjoyment of all that He has determined to do for His own glory in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. I trust that God may help us to understand these things a little: His favour as our present standing; the knowledge of Himself as Father, and the consequent enjoyment of all that belongs to the household of God; all the secrets of God resident in that Christ.

The Lord graciously give these things a larger place, in the power of the Spirit, in our hearts, and may we not only appreciate what God has shown to us for His own glory in Christ, but be found intelligently responding to it. The burden of the apostle's prayers in this epistle is that the saints may not only see these things objectively as presented to us in Christ, but that they might be formed in us for the praise of God.

PSALM 84: 1

How lovely is Thy dwellingplace,
 O Lord of Hosts, to me.
 The tabernacles of Thy grace
 How pleasant, Lord they be.

THE pursuit of pleasing oneself can hardly be included in the list of modern cults. Yet all available evidence would show that in this our day and age one dominant characteristic is that of pleasing self. Indeed the more so because modern facilities have so greatly increased the variety of ways this pursuit can choose. It would scarcely be exaggerating to say that much of the world's unhappy state today has developed from the unvarying insistence upon the well-known theme, "I shall please myself," and this not only in the sphere of sinful pleasures, but in the cultural and often the religious domain of contemporary man.

Self-pleasing, however, is as old as the human race itself and, as the Divine record proves, is of the very essence of sinful human nature. Fallen man has no other centre of reference than himself whether it be in matters of pleasure or philosophy, and only in the new nature, begotten of God, is there found the motive to relate every desire to God's will and what is pleasing to Him. To the Scripturally furnished mind this is abundantly clear from passages as well known as Hebrews 11: 6, "without faith it is impossible to please Him," and Romans 14: 23, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

In following this subject it has been of much interest and profit to consider the example of Enoch as one of the earliest names on record of a man who pleased God when practically everyone else in his patriarchal world seemed bent on pleasing themselves. But what made him different from his fellows? Some might answer that there was much less to distract one in that far-off

kind of life, and there would therefore be a simplicity conducive to the practice of godliness. How then do we account for a condition of society so corrupt and nauseating to God that on the death of Enoch's son, Methuselah, He had to sweep the world that then was with the judgment of the Flood? Indeed, that world was essentially identical with the world that now is, and in which our lives are now lived.

Now let us observe that this man, Enoch, was no recluse, with an inherent preference for his own withdrawn company to the society of others. Such conduct would only have been another form of pleasing self and has been frequently exhibited in men of no particular piety. A family man, in the truest sense, with sons and daughters, he "walked with God," says Genesis 5: 22. Yet it is conceivable that many of Enoch's contemporaries scoffed, criticised and even detested the way of life they saw in him. "This man," they would say, "only lives to please God." Such was his reputation or "testimony before his translation" from this world, as we read in Hebrews 11: 5. Be it noted that this was no obituary compliment but a living commentary before God took him. How many would aspire to an eloquent epitaph which has no necessary connection with the known life lived!

Then what is the answer to the question, "What made Enoch so different from others of his day?" One word explains it in the chapter which is a treatise on this word — Hebrews 11, the significant word "faith;" thus "by faith Enoch. . . ." Faith brings God into every question and believes Him, trusts Him, and therefore pleases Him

despite every other consideration. Is this the quality of the faith we possess? Not merely a natural trait of trustfulness, which some appear to have without any true faith, but a God-begotten confidence which can resist the popular trend of things and maintain that He alone is right, and in doing so prove that His will is best. It may be protested that Enoch's life was short, a mere three hundred and sixty-five years when a life-span of eight hundred or nine hundred years was common in those remote days. But it must surely be agreed that it was sufficiently long to demonstrate the validity of a life of faith characterised by pleasing God and walking with Him!

One day they were looking for Enoch (do we wonder why?) but he was not to be found, because God had "translated" him — literally moved him to a new address. This word is seldom used in this context today but it will be recalled that the Archbishop of York was said (some little time ago) to be "translated" to the See of Canterbury when he became Primate. He was veritably "moved to a new address." The world today is looking for men of faith, who live to please God, perhaps for a variety of reasons — to scoff, to criticise or even to vent their hatred.

But as with Enoch, so with believers in this contemporary scene, they will look one day in vain. Beloved, living to please God today is no more popular, even in the Christian profession, than it was in Enoch's day, but does that matter when God has destined to remove us from man's world of unhappy strife and translate us (move us to a new address) to Heaven at the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ? If our desire and bent now — in this life — is to be pleasing to Him, then we shall cherish the glorious hope of being

with Him in that scene where nothing that displeases Him shall ever enter. In such a scene alone shall we find that there is "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

Of course, there has only been one life lived in this world in which the claim could be made — and made publicly — "I do **always** those things which please the Father" (John 8: 29). The indisputable claim of the sinless Son of God, would spell blasphemy from any other lips. But so patently true were His words that we read in the next verse, "As He spake these words, many believed on Him." May it be that because we are so unlike Him in this way that we look in vain often for those who will bow to the authority of the Word which we preach? Would that there was a revival of that faith that lives to please God, then perhaps we would be permitted to see many believing on Him.

How striking, in this connection, are the words of Romans 15: 3, that "even Christ pleased not Himself." He alone could have rightly exercised the prerogative to do what He liked — and that without sin. In Him there was no possible conflict with the will of God, but is it not remarkable to find this in the context used to urge us "not to please ourselves." He has left "us an example, that we should follow His steps . . .," says Peter. For Him, it led only to the Cross, but for us, while sharing His rejection, it can only lead to the glory.

The way in which our prayer life is allied to our theme is challengingly indicated in 1 John 3: 22, which reads, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Some have found difficulty in understanding this passage because of its

absoluteness, allowing of no modification to the standard. The writer may be one of these, and can better see the force of 1 John 5: 14, which says, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." But the apparent (not actual) difference in these verses may well be explained by the unique way in which the Apostle John presents the new nature as entirely of God, obedient only to God's will, capable of growing but not capable of sinning, therefore disregarding (for his present purpose) a mixed state in which degrees and modifications are admissible. So these verses can be read in perfect agreement with each other. But nothing should blunt the edge of the practical application of this to the conscience. It could explain, perhaps, a great deal of seemingly unanswered prayer in our lives, if it is not characteristic of us "that we do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Says the Psalmist, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66: 18), and the Apostle James had to say to some, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4: 3), in contrast to the kind of ask-

ing of which he speaks in chapter 1: 6, "let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."

Do we pray for certain things without diligently looking for and seeking their implementation in our lives and the lives of others? Then we shall be disappointed. For instance, do we pray for unity among believers in the Lord Jesus, but forbear to act in ways consistent with such desires? Then we are certainly not doing those things which are pleasing in His sight (cf. Eph. 4: 3 and also 6: 18), however much we may gain the approbation of others. Do we pray to our Saviour God that "all men might be saved" (1 Tim. 2: 1-4) and withhold from becoming "the servant of all, that I may gain the more" and from being "made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some?" Then may the Lord Himself exercise our hearts as to pleasing — not ourselves or merely others whom we may wish to impress — but pleasing Him, in Whose blessed footsteps we tread, seeking no approval of our service but His — and that for His glory alone.

THE BIBLE

"I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing — the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book. At any price, give me the book of God . . . I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book."

JOHN WESLEY, 1747.

Romans 6: 6 Ephesians 2: 14, 15; 4: 22-24 Colossians 3: 9-15

IN the passages indicated at the head of this paper, the Spirit of God speaks of two very different men — “our old man,” and “the new man.” It is proposed to consider what the Word of God has to say about these, in the spirit of prayer and dependence, and to seek the spiritual gain to be obtained from some measure of apprehension of the truths involved.

Our old man crucified

“Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him” (Christ) (Rom. 6: 6, N.Trans.). This is a great fact which no believer could have known had not God revealed it in His holy Word — a fact to be received by faith and acted upon.

But who, or what, is “our old man?” The simple answer is that he represents all that we are as children of Adam in his sinful, fallen state. The Word of God reveals very clearly in this epistle that when Adam transgressed the commandment of God, he not only incurred the direct consequences for himself, but, as the head of his race, also involved the whole of his posterity in his ruin (Rom. 5: 12-21).

For approximately 4,000 years of human history, man, as a responsible creature under probation, exhibited continuously, under the eye of God, his hopeless moral corruption, and his implacable hostility to God. This was manifest whatever the conditions under which he was tested, whether without law or under law. The testing culminated in the rejection and crucifixion by God’s earthly people (who ought to have recognised and received their long-

promised Messiah) of Christ, their rightful King. In this they were associated with the representatives of the Gentile nations.

Thus man, the progeny of fallen Adam (actuated by Satan, the enemy of God and man) crucified Him Who was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3: 16), and in so doing, finally demonstrated that in any or all of his phases or conditions he is the enemy of God. Therefore, at the cross, God executed His moral judgment on that order of man, and the believer is entitled to lay hold of the fact and its consequences by simple faith. Hence it is written that “**OUR** old man has been crucified with Him” and it is the privilege of faith to **know** this, and to apply the truth in individual experience.

The new man created

But if our old man was brought judicially to an end at the cross, God has another man in view, spoken of in the passages in Ephesians and Colossians as “the new man,” and with **this** man every believer is eternally identified. How has this new man come into being? Ephesians 2: 14, 15 supplies the answer. Christ is his creator and he is created in Christ.

Before the coming of Christ, Israel enjoyed a position of privilege and national relationship with God. They were, by God’s command, separate from the Gentile nations. There was a middle wall of partition (or enclosure, N.Trans.) between them and the nations. But in the passage now under consideration we learn that in the death and resurrection of Christ, that middle wall has been

broken down; that fleshly distinctions with consequent enmity, have been abolished; and that He has made **in Himself** of twain one new man, so making peace.

This new man, while not, of course, Christ personally, may nevertheless be described as Christ characteristically. Christ risen and sitting on the right hand of God is said to be "our life" (Col. 3: 4), and this life is expressed as the moral beauties of our Lord Jesus Christ are reproduced, by Divine workmanship, in the lives of believers on the earth.

The character of the new man

The moral character of the old man is depicted with uncompromising clarity in Ephesians 4: 17-19 — vanity of mind, darkened understanding, alienation from the life of God through ignorance, lasciviousness — the whole being summarised in verse 22 as "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." But, writes the inspired apostle to the Ephesian saints, "Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (vv. 20, 21). Clearly, therefore, the character of the new man is seen objectively in the Man Christ Jesus, and is to be reproduced in the believer by his learning, hearing, and being taught by Him; and the summary of His character is found in verse 24, "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

It is of the utmost importance to realise that, notwithstanding the wording of the Authorised Version in the contrary sense, there is no exhortation in verses 22-24 to put off the old man, to be renewed in the spirit of the mind, and to put on the new man; but, on the contrary, the truth is that these things have

actually taken place (see N.Trans.). This is also confirmed in Colossians 3: 9, 10. Clear apprehension of this would save many from endless, but futile, efforts to put off the old man and put on the new. In the case of every believer this takes place, through the work of God (though probably not known or understood at the time) when Christ is received by faith as Saviour.

The renewal of the new man

If the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new are accomplished facts, never to be reversed or modified, there is, however, a process which goes on continuously, described in Colossians 3: 10 (N.Trans.) as "renewal into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him," i.e. Christ. Two different words are used to describe the new man, that in Ephesians 2 and 4, signifying "new in kind," in the sense that nothing of the kind had ever been known before; whereas the word used in Colossians means "new in time," that is, fresh or young. Both these conceptions are true of the Man Christ Jesus in resurrection; and the renewal of the new man can only be secured as the believer seeks the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and has his mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth (Col. 3: 1, 2).

Chapter 2 of this epistle shows that the Colossian saints were in danger of seeking renewal elsewhere — in worldly philosophy and religious ritualism — so that the inspired apostle was constrained to remind them that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him" (Col. 2: 9, 10). The Corinthian saints, on the other hand, were attracted by worldly wisdom, and had to be re-

minded of "Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1: 23, 24). The Galatian believers, in their turn, were seduced by Judaizing teachers to seek renewal in worldly religion, and were reminded by the apostle of the moral consequences of the cross of Christ, and the presence and functions of the Holy Spirit.

These plain warnings in Scripture emphasize a fact of vital importance to every Christian, that for the sustenance and renewal of the new man there is literally nothing effectual outside of Christ.

It is also evident that the object in this process of renewal is increasing moral likeness to Christ (Col. 3: 10), in a circle of unity and peace, where all fleshly distinction is obliterated, whether it be national, religious, cultural or social; and where Christ is everything, and in all (Col. 3: 11, N. Trans.), (that is, Christ filling the vision as the all-sufficient object of heart and mind, and Christ in all, subjectively, as the life of the believer).

The graces of the new man

In answer to all that God has accomplished through Christ, in the judgment of the old man, the creation of the new man in Christ, and his renewal after Christ, there is to be the practical working out and display in the life and conduct of the believer of the beautiful moral graces of the new man, which are the moral graces of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3: 12-15).

When Jesus was here in lowly yet

perfect manhood, God saw the moral glory which was displayed in Him in all its absolute perfection, and it filled His heart with unfailing delight and satisfaction. He now looks down and sees that same glory displayed, in measure, in the lives of His saints.

But here, exhortation comes into its proper place. First of all, there is to be the putting to death, in a practical sense, of our members which are on earth (v. 5), which involves the continual application to oneself of the truth that "our old man has been crucified with him." Paul exemplified this when he wrote "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2: 20). Allied with this there is to be the "putting off" of the unlovely, hateful habiliments of the old man described in verses 8 and 9, and the "putting on," in detail, of the moral graces of the new — bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and, above all, love (Col. 3: 12-14).

This metamorphosis will only be apparent as the believer, having grasped by faith the great facts that his "old man" has been crucified with Christ, and that he is eternally identified with "the new man" in Christ, seeks his sustenance and renewal only after Christ, and is thus formed, by Divine workmanship, after the image of Christ.

May our God grant that this happy process may proceed without hindrance or interruption in the writer of these lines, and in all those who read them.

ELIJAH has a place of great importance in the Scriptures. Conditions had greatly deteriorated following the break away of Jeroboam from Rehoboam; and now that Ahab was on the throne of Israel, he committed greater evil in idolatry than all before him. He had also married Jezebel, a bitter enemy of Jehovah and His faithful people. Hiel, too, had rebuilt Jericho, the city connected with a curse from God in the days of Joshua (Josh. 6: 26). "He laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun" (1 Kings 16: 34). It is at this stage, when evil seems to be triumphant, that God begins to work in the establishing of His Name, bringing judgment upon the idolatrous nation, and raising up a fearless prophet in Elijah to stem the tide of evil. The meaning of the name Elijah is, "My God is Jehovah."

Hence, in 1 Kings 17, it is recorded that Elijah, having pronounced that no rain shall fall upon the land except at his word, is told by the Lord to hide himself. The prophet, being connected with it, feels the severity of the famine, but learns also the care of God for himself in the circumstances. He is directed eastward, the place of sunrising and the herald of a new day, to know Jehovah as **the God of creation**. For by Cherith (the gorge), the ravens are commanded of God to bring bread and flesh to Elijah, morning and evening, and he drank of the brook. After many days, the brook dried up, making way for further manifestations of God's care and provision toward His servant

prophet who had obediently fulfilled His word.

He is told to go to Zarephath (a refining furnace), for there God had commanded a widow to sustain him. Here we see one of the humble and faithful servants of God, ready and willing to be used in the testing, although all seemed to be finished. She is gathering sticks, but readily agrees to bring Elijah a drink of water, at his request. The real need is made known when he asks her to bring a morsel of bread also. She replied: "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (1 Kings 17: 12). In widowhood she knew something of sorrow and poverty; but as a woman of faith, she knew also the prophet's God. The scene is at the gate of the city, where civil administration had broken down, but where God was to show what He could do. The word of the prophet is, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son." This is complemented by the assuring promise of the God of Israel, "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." Truly, **the God of providence**.

For many days this household of faith, woman, son and prophet, proved the goodness of God; but in the ways of divine wisdom, they were to know Him in a much deeper way, as **the God of Resurrection**. The son of the woman died, and her

first thought of God was that He must be a God of judgment, bringing retribution for her past sin. But how could this be, seeing that she had received this rich provision from His bountiful hand throughout the season of drought? Elijah asked for the son of the woman, and carried him up to the loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. Then we see the prophet, in the energy of faith, turn to God in prayer for this great distress, to learn of Him in His power and might over death.

How intimately the man of God addressed Jehovah, asking Him the reason for bringing evil upon this widow who had lodged him, by slaying her son! It would seem that he knew what to do in the circumstances apart from instruction from the Lord, for he measured himself upon the child, and cried to the Lord. This he did three times, and was heard and answered; death was vanquished by life. God had truly declared Himself as the God of

resurrection, to the deep joy and faith of Elijah and the woman. With what delight would Elijah bring the son to his mother, and exclaim, "See, thy son liveth!" This experience was effective in confirming the woman's faith, for she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

Hence, we see how God will encourage His own by ministering to their deep need in times of great testing, and thereby revealing Himself in His greatness and glory. Firstly, He revealed Himself as the God of Creation, commanding the ravens, contrary to nature, to bring bread and flesh for the sustaining of the prophet fulfilling His will. Secondly, as the God of Providence, He satisfied the need of a household by the unfailing supply of meal and oil; finally, as the God of Resurrection, He overcame death with life, proving that nothing is impossible with Him, and greatly strengthening faith and love toward Himself.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Michael Johnson writes from Grangemouth —

It has often been said that Matthew's Gospel presents generally the Lord Jesus as the King, and more specifically, that His royal lineage is traced in chapter 1 of the gospel.

When the first promise concerning the throne is made to David (2 Sam. 15) no conditions are made and we understand that as great David's greater Son, the Lord will reign in righteousness.

However, when the promises are made to Solomon (2 Chron. 7: 17, 18) conditions are made. We know

from subsequent history that failure not only marked Solomon, but his descendants also failed to the extent that Jeremiah (chapter 22) pronounces Jehovah's curse on the seed of Jeconiah so that no man should ever prosper on David's throne. In view of Solomon's failure to keep the conditions imposed by Jehovah and in view of the curse upon Coniah and his seed, will you please explain how, when both these are named in the direct line from David to the Lord Jesus Christ, the latter will inherit and reign on the throne of David?

The Editor answers —

An answer to this question might be found through the two principles of exact attention to the content of the promises, and taking note of the context. In 2 Samuel 7: 12-17, the original promise concerning David's seed and throne, three separate things are promised. (1) That David's immediate seed, Solomon, should succeed him. (2) That if David's seed should sin, he would be chastened, but not given up, as Saul was. (3) The more distant promise was that David's lineage, kingdom and throne were established for ever.

Note particularly that there is already an "if" in verse 14, but this "if" refers to part (2) of the original promise, whereas parts (1) and (3) are strictly unconditional. It is this "if" which is expanded in the later passages which give the Lord's word to Solomon and concerning Coniah, that is, the kind of chastening which would fall on David's house is there described. The conditional promise repeated to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7: 18 is that there should "not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel". The conditions, alas, were not fulfilled, and now for many centuries a man has failed to

sit on David's throne.

Taking note of the context, this is surely also the meaning of Jeremiah 22: 30. Coniah (also named Jehoia-chin and Jeconiah), and his brother Zedekiah were in fact the last kings of David's line to this day. The meaning of the word "seed" here is the same as in 2 Samuel 7: 12, that is, his immediate seed. The Lord was not saying to Jeremiah that the ultimate Seed, great David's greater Son, would not be also of Coniah's seed, but the more limited message that Coniah would be the last of his line for thousands of years, surely a sufficiently great mark of the Lord's displeasure.

I suggest, therefore, that the consequences of the failure of Solomon and Coniah and many between concern part (2) of the original promise made to David, and that they fulfil this to the letter. The direct promise by which God will give to the Lord Jesus the throne of His father David, is part (3), and this is unaffected by failure. The mercies of David are sure mercies, and the last page of scripture gives splendid confirmation of this: "I, Jesus . . . am the Root and the Offspring of David. . . . Surely I come quickly."

A YEARLY CYCLE OF BIBLE PRAYERS

To be sure of praying according to God's will, use Bible prayers, . . . giving one month in turn to each.

Jan.	John 17: 15, 17, 20, 21	July	Col. 1: 9-12
Feb.	Acts 4: 24-30	Aug.	1 Thess. 3: 12, 13; 5: 23
Mar.	Rom. 15: 5, 6, 13	Sept.	2 Thess. 1: 11, 12; 2: 16, 17
Apr.	Eph. 1: 17-23	Oct.	2 Thess. 3: 1, 5, 16
May	Eph. 3: 14-21	Nov.	Heb. 13: 20, 21
June	Phil. 1: 9-11	Dec.	Ps. 90: 12-17

WILT THOU NOT REVIVE US AGAIN?

C. H. SELLEY

PSALM 85: 6

PSALEM 85 is altogether Jewish in its setting, but these things "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope", and this Psalm contains lessons for us today. It will be apposite to ourselves, if we feel that we are not in the practical enjoyment of all the riches that have been laid up for us in Christ. The Psalm divides naturally into three parts: 1. (vv. 1-3) Past experiences, 2: (vv. 4-7) Present exercises, 3. (vv. 8-13) Future expectation.

It has often been within the ways of God to remind His people, as He does here, of His previous faithfulness and graciousness. It does not require much perception to see that when a soul cries out "Wilt Thou not revive us again" there has been a recalling of former things, some deep exercise, and probably a lot of discouragement. It is in such a situation that the soul calls upon God, with the consciousness that if He does not work and revive, then there is no hope of recovery. These are the words of people, who like ourselves have had difficulties in life, but have gone through them in a relationship to the Lord, and their experiences can be an inspiring example to us.

Part One recalls what the Lord had wrought in bringing back the captivity of Jacob and forgiving the sin of His people. It will be profitable if we ponder afresh what the Lord has done for us. It is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the

Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He has predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, and our prayerful meditation of what He has wrought, and His faithfulness, will generate gratitude in our own hearts, also praise on our lips.

The contrast between the first three verses and the middle section of the Psalm will be noted at once. The previous verses related what God had wrought, but now this section pleads with God to do what earlier verses indicated He had done. The explanation seems to be that the writer now wishes for his people and himself, that they might enter into the good and blessing of what God had made available to them. If God in verse three had turned Himself from the fierceness of His anger, the Psalmist now desires to be turned into alignment with God's own thoughts and ways, so that the people shall have no sense of being under His displeasure. The Psalmist reasons in this section, and prays in effect: Cannot we enter into the full experience and enjoyment of verse three, and all that God has done, or must we continue in the doldrums for ever?

"Wilt Thou not revive us again; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee." The desire of the Psalmist was for revival, as a means of bringing back the people to the enjoyment of the Lord Himself. It was not for his own advancement,

or anything he stood for, nor for the tribe to which he personally belonged. His request was God-honouring, and altogether unselfish. He knew something of the joy which had been theirs in former times. We do not know exactly what he had in mind; it may have been particular days of rejoicing, or the general environment in which they lived. Whatever he had in view, we can be sure that such joy would be the result of obedience to the Word of God, and in harmony with His will. We might think of one of the happy days for the nation in the time of King David, as recorded for us in 1 Chronicles 15. There we find they were very careful to obey God's commandment when bringing in the Ark of God to the City of David. On a previous occasion they had acted according to men's thoughts, but it was contrary to the mind of God, and His displeasure was seen in the death of Uzzah. When the Lord's word was obeyed, as it was in chapter 15, then we find the porters, cymbals, psalteries, harps, singers, doorkeepers and trumpet-blowers in order and in harmony, and all Israel in the enjoyment of the great event; also the Lord had His portion in the sacrifices. In another example, the consecration of the temple in the days of King Solomon, we see the positive obedience of Solomon, in what he did, also an equal obedience on the part of David, in that he had abstained from doing that very thing. This obedience had its own reward; the king and the people together held a great feast for seven days, and the Lord had His portion in the sacrifices. It was on the eighth day that the king sent the people away, "and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all that the Lord had done for David His servant, and for Israel His people. Again, an out-

standing Passover was the one held in the life of King Josiah, about which we read (2 Kings 23: 21), "and the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant." These were the joys of by-gone days, facts of history, but alas not their experience at the time the Psalm was written.

"Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord" is the request of the writer, who has already apprehended the favours of the Lord. The desire for mercy shows that the supplicant has no "rights" in the matter, and that he has no ground upon which he can make a demand for consideration; he is entirely shut up to mercy. We do not hear of the Children of Israel pleading with their captors for mercy, that would have been of no avail, but they could call upon the God of Heaven and Earth to show them mercy, and He did so. The Psalmist continues by asking "Grant us Thy salvation", yet these were the people that had been saved from Egypt's bondage, the Red Sea's flood, the starvation of the wilderness, and had known God in a special way in Zion. These were the people who representatively had enjoyed the reign of David, Solomon, and Josiah. They were God's own people, a privileged nation, a sanctified race, yet they needed, and to their credit they asked God to grant them salvation. Their escape from servitude was not that which could satisfy their souls, nor was it the full benefit which God had purposed for them.

It is thus that the second section of this Psalm ends, but if we are to get the benefit of this piece of Holy Scripture, we shall have to look at it afresh. We must challenge ourselves again, "Do we, do I, need this reviving?" Revival in this context,

does not refer to some evangelical activity, in which unbelievers are converted. It is for Christians, who have the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Saviour, but have a consciousness of their own need to be revitalised in the spiritual pathway.

Christian people amongst the English-speaking races of today are the most privileged community that ever lived in the whole history of this world. In general we have inherited the protestant tradition, for which our forbears gave their lives. We have the very Word of God, printed in our own language, readily available to us, and we have all been taught to read. As local churches, we have the leading of the Holy Spirit, freedom with the authorities to come together as often as we wish, and many facilities at our disposal which make it easy for us to assemble at convenient times. Individually we can say that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, we have been called with an holy calling, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, made partakers of the divine nature, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and indwelt by Him, having a future of glory before us, and meantime we are loved with an eternal love. The question for the present writer is: Am I living in the good and enjoyment of these things? If not, why not?

If we look around us, and speaking quite generally (because there are exceptions for which we can thank God), we find the prayer meetings are badly attended, Bible study at the minimum, worship often little more than a thankfulness that the terrors of hell have been avoided, the **Burnt Offering** aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus overlooked. The foreign mission field is starved of workers generally and particularly of male workers. It seems that

all this springs from our own failure to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and living in the constant expectation of our Lord's return. In all this the writer of this article has his part and responsibility. We shall ask ourselves the question, Must we continue like this? Revival presupposes a falling back, and we shall need to ask ourselves the question, Have we left our first love? Has the candlestick of testimony been removed? We must each face these things for himself, but we can be sure that God is faithful by whom we were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. If we knew His fellowship better, we should be more concerned about the deadness of everything around us which is out of accord with the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this would drive us to our knees in prayer more often.

The last section of this Psalm contains expectations for the future. The writer immediately turns from the plural, in which the previous part has been written, and employs the singular. He does not say "we" but "I", and there is only one thing he undertakes to do. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." He is not going to listen to what everybody else has to say, and then make up his mind who it is right to follow. He has decided, as the first step towards revival, that he will listen only to God the Lord, and he does this in the confidence that "He will speak peace" but only to "His people". The hearing which the Psalmist undertakes will involve waiting for His time, until He speaks, and it will be conditioned by his own nearness. Also, when God the Lord speaks, there must be complete obedience to all His demands and claims.

The willingness to hear implies devotion to the Speaker, and is an

acknowledgment of His authority as God the Lord, and it confesses the listeners' own insufficiency for the situation. In this humble position, however, the dignity of saints is maintained, because they are His, and this is what He has made them. "But let them not turn again to folly." The word "again" seems to stress the awfulness of their previous disobedience, and the terrible-ness of any future failure, also that repentance has done its own work. They had been foolish, and had neglected God the Lord Himself; also they had turned everyone to his own way, and in consequence they had gone into captivity. We shall do well to note the order in their exercise: (a) a willing mind; (b) a listening ear; (c) a single purpose; (d) a personal submission; and all this before a single movement of the hand or foot. The divine instruction must first be sought, otherwise even a good action may be badly timed. There must be the humility and submission, because it is the "meek He will guide in judgment, and teach them His way" (Psalm 25: 9) and there must be this complete disregard for personal likes and dislikes if the revival is to be brought into the life.

Verse 9 shows the tenderness of our God that those who had had such grievous chastening should still be told that "salvation is nigh them that fear Him". What comfort for the backslider of every age! The result of listening to what God the Lord has to say is that glory may dwell in "our" land. In verse one, the Psalmist speaks of it as "Thy" land, but now he is able to see the harmony which exists in everything that is answering to the mind of God, and he participates in its enjoyment. The glory would include all the displayed excellence of God, when He is given His rightful place as Lord.

The Psalmist concludes this pray-

erful meditation, which in itself is a testimony, by considering that which is for the Lord Himself. He steps on to the highest platform of experience, and into the most restful of all considerations by viewing the future in the light of the Lord's own glory. There may be times which bring joy into the heart, but the best seasons are those which bring pleasure to the blessed God, and yet can be shared by the creature, as they walk humbly with Him.

We live in a day when men lightly speculate about the most high God, and subject His word to their judgment, but they cannot claim or expect blessing that way. The promise is to those that tremble at His word (Isiah 66: 2), it is to those that turn to it, listen to its precise message, accept it implicitly even when it cannot be readily understood, and tremble lest in ignorance they should depart from it, or neglect the smallest iota of it. It is to such that the Lord has promised to look, and such He will revive, and that for His own glory.

How do we hear? Do we accept scripture as the very word of God, even when it hurts, and does it come to us in power, or have we been disobedient to it in the past, so that we get no blessing, even when others do? Does it come with much assurance, and does it sanctify us practically, or are we loving the world and the things in the world? Has it brought us to know HIM, and so to abide in Him that in our measure we walk even as He walked? Is our life marked by intimate communion with the Father in secret, as characterised the Lord's life here, as He spent whole nights in prayer? Are we seeking honours from men, or are we identified with the world-rejected Saviour, now risen and soon coming Lord? Hearing God's word would keep us in

right and proper relationship with the one body, and would help us to carry our fair share of the responsibilities. We shall have to take a low place, but the meek will He guide in judgment, and teach them His way. In the lowly place before Him, conscious of His presence, He will show us what is displeasing to Himself, and if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There will be no benefit unless the word is mixed with faith in them that hear it, but to those that turn to Him with the open ear, and submissive spirit, He will surely speak peace. It will be a humbling process, and against this the flesh will revolt, and there will be all the pains of the conflict.

As to our service, it is a sad spectacle, as we look out upon evangelical work generally (there are outstanding exceptions) and we see how little the power of the Holy Spirit authenticates the Gospel as it is

preached. We know there is abundant need, and the power of God to save sinners has not been diminished, yet “ Ye have sown much and bring in little ” applies very much today, and we must challenge ourselves afresh, **Why?**

May the ever faithful Lord graciously use these thoughts to stir up our minds and hearts to all the fullness of what He has done in the past, to generate within us a desire for revival from Himself, to give us a fresh impetus to go to Him in prayer. May we go back to the scriptures as scholars willing to learn, and to be unreservedly obedient to all that we find there, confident that He is more ready to revive than we are to ask. May it be for His glory, our own soul's blessing, and in dynamic witness to those around us, that “ This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death ” Amen, and Amen.

BE A MAN OF PURPOSE

The Apostle Paul in his epistles revealed himself to be a man marked by intensity of purpose. Being filled and controlled by the Spirit of God, he embraced the purpose of God. Here in the actual words of scripture are some of the deep longings of his heart.

“ **That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death** ” (Phil. 3: 10).

“ **That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus** ” (Phil. 3: 12).

“ I am made all things to all men, **that I might by all means save some** ” (1 Cor. 9: 22).

“ I long to see you, **that I may impart** unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established ” (Rom. 1: 11).

What are the objects that we set before us in our lives? Are we anything like the Apostle Paul? Or do we fritter away our lives, pursuing little objects of pleasure, or of present and temporal gain in the world? Let us each seriously consider this matter.

F. B. HOLE.

8. THE LORD'S SUPPER

PERHAPS the one subject of agreement by Christian writers of all points of view on worship is that the Lord's Supper is the centre for true Christian worship. What is much more important is that this statement is strictly true to Scripture; "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10: 16).

It cannot be doubted that the worship of individuals is acceptable to God. The worship of Abraham and in many Psalms exemplifies this. Whenever a Christian's heart, moved by thoughts of the loveliness of Christ, rises to the Father in responsive love and gratitude, there is true worship. Nevertheless, the centring of the Old Testament worship on the tabernacle and the temple, as well as the essential plurality of the holy priesthood in 1 Peter 2: 5, lead to the conclusion that the full intention of God is seen in collective rather than individual worship.

The expression "the cup of blessing" is often misunderstood, being taken to mean blessing from God coming down to His people. This meaning is often linked by contrast with the Saviour's cup of sorrow when He said "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?", and when in Gethsemane He prayed, with sweat as great drops of blood falling down to the ground, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is indeed true, and will never be forgotten, that His people have received the blessing because He bore the sorrow, but this is not the meaning of the expression "the cup of blessing". Here we

are to understand blessing rising to God from His people. That this is the meaning is clear from two considerations. First, the explanatory phrase which follows, "which we bless", shows that the Spirit of God intends blessing **by** the worshippers, and not blessing **to** them. Second, "the cup of blessing which we bless" is evidently intended as a parallel with the Jews' cup of blessing, and this unquestionably refers to blessing rising to God. The Passover Service as celebrated in the apostles' time included a Cup of Blessing, so named because in taking this cup they uttered the words, "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God". Over "the cup of blessing which we bless" arise blessing and worship to the Father and the Son. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1: 3). "Worthy art thou . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5: 9).

The Breaking of Bread is twice considered in 1 Corinthians, in 10: 16, 17 and 21 under the title "the Lord's Table", and again in 11: 20 to 34 under the title "the Lord's Supper". The latter passage forms a unity with the following chapters extending from 11: 17 to 14: 40, and this section is very important for our subject since it describes the kind of gathering in which the Lord's Supper is partaken, and therefore the kind of gathering which is the setting for the true worship. The section comprising 1 Corinthians 11: 17 to 14: 40 is shown to be a unity principally by the recurring phrase, "in (the) church" or "in assembly". We begin at 11: 18 ("when ye are come together in assembly") and

pass to the same phrase in 14: 19 ("in assembly I had rather speak five words with my understanding") in 14: 28 ("let him keep silence in assembly") and in 14: 35 ("it is a shame for a woman to speak in assembly"). Also the word "speaking", very frequent in chapter 14, is there an expansion on the same word in 12: 3 ("no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed") and in 13: 1 ("though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels"). The frequent repetition of these two phrases suggests the title for the whole section, "Speaking in assembly".

Principally from 14: 15 and 16 we know what were the activities appropriate to meeting "in assembly". They were prophecy, tongues, prayer, singing, blessing, giving thanks, teaching, revelation, interpretation. It would surely be quite wrong to conclude that, because prophecy for edification is shown to be superior to tongues, the gathering described is for edification. The activities mentioned seem rather to indicate that the New Testament gathering generally, for many purposes, was of this kind, and that the Lord's Supper was one of the principal purposes for which such gatherings were held. In such gatherings for the purpose of the Lord's Supper, blessing, giving thanks and singing would doubtless be prominent, though others of the list might have a place.

It is very interesting to note the tests by which all that takes place in assembly is to be judged. In chapter 14 these tests are employed to compare prophecy with tongues, to the detriment of tongues. In verses 3 to 5 the test is, Does it edify? In verses 6 to 12 the question to be answered is, Is it clear in meaning? And in verses 13 to 20, Is the understanding of the speaker

satisfyingly involved? Above all, in chapter 13 the test is, Have I love?

The characteristics of such a gathering (the setting for the Lord's Supper, and therefore for collective worship) are assembled in verses 26 to 40. Every man may contribute in any of the activities named, according to what the Spirit gives. Everything must be judged by the tests described. Women are commanded to be silent. Everything must be decent and orderly; for example, two persons are not to speak at once, and a speaker must not lose control of himself in a trance.

Such is the framework established by the Spirit of God for His activities in the Church, for eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, for blessing and exalting the Lord Jesus, and for the worship of the Father. It is idle to maintain that Scripture leaves this matter open. The matter could not well be given more explicitly or in greater detail. 1 Corinthians 14 is a dead letter to so many Christians because it conflicts with the deeply ingrained habits of Christendom, not because its meaning is obscure.

It remains to notice how closely these features are connected with what has previously been said about worship as a system of priesthood and sacrifice. For this divinely formed company, for whose gatherings these chapters are the commandments of the Lord, is the spiritual house of which Peter speaks, the holy priesthood ordained to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is to call to mind the one great sacrifice of Calvary: by this remembrance there are formed in the minds and hearts of the participants those thoughts of the love of Christ shown in death for

the glory of God and His people's salvation which become substance for spiritual sacrifices. Just as, following that sacrifice, the Lord Jesus says in resurrection, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee", so the saints in assembly, guided, directed and empowered by the Spirit, pass from the contemplation of Christ in death to the realisation of His resurrection, and so to the worship of the Father and the Son. On the morning of the resurrection, with an urgency which would brook no delay, the Lord sent

to the assembled disciples the message, "My Father and your Father . . . My God and your God" (John 20: 17). Immediately following His death He moves to engage His disciples with the Father; so in like manner the remembrance of His death leads to the worship of the Father. We have already seen how this is pictured in Revelation 5. The vision of the Lamb as it had been slain leads the dwellers in heaven to give blessing and worship to Him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.

IN VAIN

J. STODDART

HOW dismal and hopeless is the picture suggested by the words "in vain"! Many ideas are associated with the expression, which is found in a variety of connections in the Scriptures and a careful review of these might be found to yield much profit.

The most commonly known use of the phrase which comes to mind is in 1 Corinthians 15 where the words "in vain" occur no less than six times, but help is often derived from the first use of any term in God's Word, and this is certainly not its first or only occurrence. Let us therefore think of Genesis 1: 2 where we read that "the earth was without form and void". The phrase under consideration may not be apparent here, but it is instructive to find that the words "without form and void" are translated "in vain" in Isaiah 45: 18, where we read, "He created it (the earth) not in vain." So we are clearly given to understand that while the original creation, perfect from the hand of

the Creator, is described in Genesis 1: 1, the scene of physical waste, emptiness (in vain) described in verse 2 was not as God had produced it. The interval of time that elapsed between the two verses is not disclosed.

But our blessed God acts in situations that seem to be in vain, and in the chaotic situation of the early creation the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (verse 2) with a view to bringing cosmos out of chaos and light, life and order out of that which had become "in vain". So from this earliest use of the expression we are encouraged to see that no situation, however hopeless and apparently in vain is beyond God's mighty power to bless and make fruitful.

"I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." These are the words of Israel as Jehovah's servant in Isaiah 49: 4. Yet in their prophetic context they are seen to relate to Christ, the Perfect Servant, the Holy One

Whom man despiseth (verse 7). Rejected and despised by His own, how truly His coming to earth appeared to be in vain, and all His gracious words and works refused made His labour and strength seem to be spent for nought and in vain. But at the very contemplation of this, Jehovah answers His faithful Servant in the words of verses 5 and 6. "And He said, It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth." So the Perfect Servant is strengthened and encouraged to say, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength." Surely this is yet another illustration of the way in which God secures His Own glory and accomplishes His Own purpose from a situation of seeming ruin and defeat, where all would be "in vain" to every other eye but His.

It is obviously with the wisdom indited by the Holy Spirit that Paul uses the same expression six times in 1 Corinthians 15. This acknowledged masterpiece of spiritual eloquence would have been ruined by the repetition of a mere catch-phrase resulting from poverty of apt expression. The insistence upon the words "in vain" is of the Spirit's design, therefore, to elaborate the dire consequence of undermining the central truth of the Gospel — the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Ye are saved . . . unless ye have believed in vain," he says in verse 2. By no means was this intended to throw doubts upon the quality of their faith but rather to question whether their undoubtedly sincere faith was in a vain thing, a vain Gospel. For such it must be if

the Christ Who died and was buried was not raised from the dead the third day according to the Scriptures. Yet he himself had been the recipient of grace, which in his case was not "in vain" because it had produced labour that excelled others in preaching the Gospel (verse 10). But such preaching was "vain" and their faith also "in vain" if Christ was not risen (verse 14). Brethren, do we stress this sufficiently in our contemporary preaching? A Gospel without a risen Christ leaves those who believe it with nothing but a vain faith and still in their sins (verse 17). For if the Christ of Calvary lies still in the dust of a Jerusalem cave we had better give up all our pretence and pretension because hope itself lies dead forever. All indeed is "in vain".

The grand climax of verse 20, "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept," is the Divine guarantee that our faith, our preaching, our labour are not in vain. Here indeed is the solid foundation upon which hope itself rests, both sure and steadfast. Therefore it is of the very essence of the Gospel that "He Who became dead is alive for evermore and has the keys of hell and of death". He who has vanquished the forces of death and of hell now pledges ultimate victory at His coming again to His own — be they then alive or asleep in the grave. At last over a scene in which death and corruption seemed to write the last epitaph over every Christian labour—"In Vain"—shall be heard the glorious shout of triumph, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

Does the appearance of things in our service for the Lord in these days seem to compel us at times to

regard it all as "in vain"? At the purely human level there may be much to support this depressing assessment, but still the Spirit of God broods over the dark picture, the spectacle of which made Solomon say, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit under the sun" (Eccles. 2: 11). We must raise our sights above the sun to the Throne where sits the risen and glorified Saviour. Let us ask ourselves afresh, "Do we serve a living and victorious Lord, or is this simply an item of our creed?" Surely the very starting point of our faith is that God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ and we say, "Thanks be to God".

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (verse 58). There is much slacken-

ing of effort and slowing of pace today, not for lack of opportunity nor suitability of equipment, but because there is the tendency to believe the Devil's suggestion that it is all in vain to "spend and be spent" in the Lord's work. Hence we listen afresh to the Apostle's urgent and yet encouraging injunction in this verse and find our hearts assured, because **we know** that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Taking our commands from none but Him, thus truly owning His Lordship, we have the guarantee that nothing can be lost or overlooked. When at last "the day dawns and the shadows flee away," Eternity's clear light will shine on the full results of every labour done for Him. Much that seemed in vain will be seen to shine for Christ's glory. "And then shall each have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4: 5, J.N.D.).

JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Baptist was born of elderly parents, the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth; he was marked from his birth to be the prophet who would prepare the way of the Messiah. Doubtless studying and meditating on the existing Scriptures whilst living in the desert, he put his youth to good account, and he knew his destiny. By the time we see him in the Bible story, he is not only a man with a message, but also one whose life was in keeping with that message. Further than this he was a man whose mind was conditioned to set himself aside in order to make way for Christ, an important lesson for all of us. He is a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord". He has learned to say not only "whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose", but "He must increase, but I must decrease", and therefore his heart was glad.

F. W. BOYD.

SOME aspects of the ascension of Christ are selected and discussed in the sections which follow. It seems clear that this subject forms a suitable sequel to the consideration of His death and resurrection; and scriptural confirmation that this is a right sequence of thought is found in verses such as Romans 8: 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The argument of this passage is that God is entirely on the side of those who are justified by faith in Christ. In the past this has once and for all been demonstrated and guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Christ, which have provided the basis which makes it possible. His present position and activities too, ascended at the right hand of God, are the evidence of the permanence and continuity of that same attitude of God on their behalf.

A further passage in which the same sequence appears is 1 Peter 1: 18-21. What had always been in view in the mind of God, the death of Christ as a Lamb without blemish and without spot, is now accomplished. God has raised Him from the dead and "given Him glory". By these means God has manifested Himself in these last times; here is the ground for faith and hope in God today. Along with the benefits received from His activities there, God, Who has given our Lord Jesus Christ His present place of exaltation, has displayed Himself by this action, for our appreciation and response.

"Where He was before"

"Doth this offend you? What

and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" (John 6: 61, 62). In the verses which precede these our Lord had spoken of His incarnation, and of His death too, in such words as "I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . . my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". He had also spoken of the need for personal appropriation, by faith, of the significance of these great matters. To those who failed to grasp the profound meaning of His words He then put this question. The words seem to imply that unbelief will more than ever be offended and unconvinced when the next event in the chain occurs, when He returns to heaven and faith in Him will have nothing tangible to support it.

The main purpose here in quoting the verse, however, is to gather from it the plain truth that our Lord in ascending to heaven has entered the place to which He belongs, from whence He came in the first place. "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Eph. 4: 9). It will later be seen that our Lord Jesus Christ has entered heaven, and has gone to that point of highest eminence and exaltation, as a Man; this He **became** when He came to earth and was not before. But it is also true and important that "the second Man is the Lord **from heaven**" (1 Cor. 15: 47). John the Baptist said of Him "After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1: 30). The place of glory and acclamation to which He has ascended, is certainly what is His due in return for His faithfulness and devotion to God,

shown in His life and death here in this world; but it is also His proper and only place **because He is Who He is.** "He hath by inheritance . . . a more excellent name than they (i.e. the angels)" (Heb. 1: 4). "He that cometh from above is above all" (John 3: 31). Our Lord's place of pre-eminence has been given Him in just recognition of the perfections of this mighty work of His, by which God has been revealed; but it is also true that the place in glory to which He has ascended is that which has been always His. It could not be a higher place than that.

" Above all "

Attention may now be focussed more particularly on the high and supreme place which our Lord now occupies. Scripture emphasises this again and again, and a sample verse which is very clear in this connection is Ephesians 1: 21. "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come." Every power, conceivable or inconceivable to human minds, present or future, is small and insignificant in relation to Him. Others names, however illustrious, lose their glory when compared with His name. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2: 10, 11). There is no part of the universe where He is not supreme, and will not be acknowledged as Lord. The One Whom God could speak of as "my servant, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" has now been exalted and extolled and made very high (Isa 43: 1, 52: 13). "There-

fore will I divide him a portion with the great . . . , **because** he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53: 12).

Ephesians 4: 8-10, which has been already quoted in reference to our Lord's descent first into this world, speaks also of His having "led captivity captive" and of His ascension as the evidence of it. These verses also stress the height to which He has gone; "far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." This is perhaps the best that language can do to express the supremacy of that position.

The converse of the statement that our Lord is above all things is that everything is under Him, and this kind of statement is also made in scripture. "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2: 8, 9). The writer is here dwelling on a passage in Psalm 8, where the Psalmist is considering man as the end and crown of all God's works in creation. Man was given dominion over all that God had made, he was set over the works of God's hands. But here it is shown, as indeed it is said elsewhere, that Adam was merely "the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5: 14). It was the ultimate dominion and supremacy of the second Man, the Man Christ Jesus, which was in God's intention from the start, and which Adam prefigured. He already occupies that place of dominion and control, and faith can see Him in that position. But the day in which He will assert His power in the irresistible sense is still future. Every eye will see Him then, and all will be subject to Him Who is King

of kings and Lord of lords.

“ At the Right Hand of God ”

A number of references to the exalted place now occupied by our Lord Jesus Christ speak of Him as having **sat down** there, waiting in patience for the day when His enemies will be made His footstool. Other passages show Him to be **active** still, during this intervening period. A few passages may be quoted to illustrate each of these aspects of His present position at the right hand of God.

Among verses which make it very plain that His atoning work is done, and that His activities of that kind have entirely ceased are Hebrews 1: 3, 13. The opening of this chapter refers to His greatness as the Son of God, Who has revealed God in a full and final way. By Himself, alone, He purged our sins; and having done so He “ sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ”. Again Hebrews 10: 12 makes a similar point. The priests of the Old Testament order stood regularly at the altar, repeatedly offering sacrifices which had no inherent value. Our Lord’s sacrifice was the great end to which they pointed; but His sacrificial work also stands in complete contrast with these earlier offerings. His great work of atonement needs no repetition; it is altogether unique, it is permanent and eternal in its value for the removal of sins. His place and attitude, seated at the right hand of God, is the witness that this is so.

That it is also right to think of our Lord continuing to work after His ascension is shown by such verses as Mark 16: 20. “ And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” The opening verses of Acts also imply this; Luke refers back to

his gospel as an account of what the Lord Jesus **began** to do, with the clear implication that the book of Acts is a record of His further operations. This leads naturally to the important fact that the descent of the Holy Spirit of God, and His activities here on earth, must be central to an understanding of our Lord’s present work. Often our Lord had referred to His departure as a necessity, and in reality a benefit to His followers; this is because the Holy Spirit would then be sent to be their guide and instructor. In this way His work was to proceed and develop in new and mightier ways than had been possible during His life on earth. More than once it is said that His disciples could not understand His sayings, but later “ when Jesus was glorified ” they did so; they were then indwelt by the Holy Spirit, with all the enlightenment that that brought (see, for example, John 7: 39, 12: 16).

Again, our Lord had said “ I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ” (Matt. 16: 18), and the events related in the Acts show the commencement and the continuation of His activity in this way. “ The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved ” (Acts 2: 47). His chosen and gifted servants, empowered by the same Holy Spirit, had their part in this too under His direction. Their bold testimony, despite opposition, and their effective and growing impact in the world of that day, is plain to read in this same book. The free and irresistible nature of this activity from God is clearly traceable to our Lord’s ascended place and the perfection and completeness of His redemptive work; that was the source of the power in these activities of grace which commenced in those days. “ Being by the right hand of God

exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2: 33). Thus, on the day of Pentecost, Peter explained what was then beginning.

Not only is there mentioned in Scripture the outward growth of the Church, by the spreading of the gospel message and its acceptance by faith; there is also that inward work, the mutual love and fellowship and edification amongst Christians, the growth in understanding and doctrine, the development of Christian graces and characteristics, the production of "the fruit of the Spirit". There is progression in awareness and judgment of things which are displeasing to the Lord too. These developments are plain to read in the book of Acts; much teaching on these lines is also to be found in the remainder of the New Testament. Needless to say, our Lord Jesus Himself is the controller and fountain-head of all true activity and life and growth within the Christian body, and the Holy Spirit the power by which it all proceeds.

"For us"

In this final section, reference is made to some of the ways in which our Lord acts today in relation to the needs and the particular interests of His people. This part of the subject alone has many facets, and brief reference to some of these must suffice.

"We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God . . ."; "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, . . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 4: 14; 9: 24). Verses such as these speak of our Lord as our representative in heaven, from Whom there

is sympathy and succour when faith is tested, support for our infirmities, grace in time of need, help and encouragement for those who pass along the journey of faith. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7: 25). Here again a contrast is drawn. The office of high-priesthood among the earthly people of God was held during the lifetime of the one who occupied it, and others succeeded to it in due course. These high-priests were men with weaknesses and infirmities of their own; they needed to offer sacrifices on their own behalf as well as in the interests of others. Not so with our Lord Jesus "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7: 26-28). Part of His ability to perform this great service for His people springs from the fact that He also has passed through the journey of faith with all its experiences. He is the "author and finisher of faith, who . . . endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12: 2). To Him we are advised to look, so as to run with endurance the race that is set before us. The forerunner has already entered within the veil; here is the source of hope and strong consolation for those who are following in His steps (Heb. 6: 18-20).

Our Lord is also alluded to as "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8: 2). In their day, the earthly priests were occupied in "accomplishing the service of God" (Heb. 9: 6) and He is the great antitype of this too. Not only is the Christian life one in which obstacles are surmounted by faith, with grace from above to help,

but there is an excess of joy and praise to God, so that heaven is in a sense entered before it is really reached. "Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near." "By him . . . let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually. . . ." "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 10: 22; 13: 15; 2: 11, 12).

Almost at the other extreme of a Christian's experience is the sad experience of failure and sin. Our Lord is also able to deal with such grave matters as this. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2: 2). Sin on the part of Christians is out of character

and cannot be treated lightly. None the less, His blood "cleanseth from all sin" and His activities can bring about confession and restoration, and greater sensitivity thereafter to things which displease our Lord.

One further aspect of our Lord's departure into heaven may be referred to. He has gone there to make preparation for His followers. His words about this to His disciples contain much of consolation and hope for present-day disciples too, and may be quoted to conclude. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 1-3).

DIVINE GUIDANCE

W. ANGLIN

"I being in the way, the LORD led me" (Gen. 24: 27)

A believer today should have the same sense of guidance and assurance of the Lord's direction as the servant of Abraham had in his day. The last message the Lord left with His disciples was: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Mat. 28: 20). This surely implies that the servant today should always seek the guidance of the Master as to his pathway and service, for he has also His company.

Sometimes a personal experience in one's service gives encouragement to rely more implicitly on the guidance of the Lord. The following is one example in my own service, but if I narrate the story, the reader

must excuse the use of the capital "I".

I was requested to visit a struggling little evangelical work in a small town some 30 miles from my residence in Brazil. This entailed firstly a ten mile horse ride to town, then 20 miles by train and a night in a not very comfortable "pensão". On Sunday morning I sallied forth and discovered there was, in a private house, a Sunday school, which in Brazil includes members ranging from 8 to 80 years of age. Arriving at the house I found a few folks present and beside me came and sat a man I did not know, but later found that he was a local

assassin that even the police feared and he had released a man they had put into the local prison. The front door of the room where we were assembled was open to the main street and some lads came to the door to disturb us, until they spied our "friend". He got up slowly and walked to the door and looked up and down the street, but no boy either small or big was to be seen, nor did any one of them again show face.

In my mind I wrote off the "work" here in that house as a poor testimony. After the school, I went out, wondering how I could profitably fill in my time until the night train arrived to take me back to my home station. I prayed for guidance, then bethought me of a brother who lived in the town, who was a tax-collector, which is a class not usually very popular. He greeted me heartily and seemed to be highly relieved to see me. He told me that a well-known Catholic lady of the town had died and was to be buried in a few hours. She had a very bright conversion on her death-bed and had then given quite a wonderful testimony as to her Hope, *that had impressed her friends and neighbours*. Would I conduct the funeral service? At first I rather shrank from the task, but knew that the Lord had directed me there for that purpose, so I undertook to do so. There foregathered a large assemblage of the elite of the little town, *who would be almost all Roman Catholics*. I well knew that I had to be careful in my remarks, and fortunately no priest appeared, probably because he had heard of the "lapse" of the deceased from his "faithful" ranks. The fact that I was unknown and English (for the *British are respected in Brazil*) would help to allay resentment. I modestly explained that I was but

a visitor and had accepted the invitation to conduct the service on hearing that the deceased lady had "died in the Lord". I said that in life or in death God recognized but two classes. These were not "Catholic and Protestant" for these classes were not in His vocabulary. The two He speaks of in the Scriptures are first those that belong to and "die in the Lord" for He says "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord", as had our departed friend. Of the other class the Lord said: "Ye shall die in your sins." I then went on to say that in a cemetery in England my mother was laid in her grave and on her tomb-stone were inscribed words written by a Roman Catholic monk in the dark ages (then I translated the words): "Let one in his innocence glory, Another in works he has done, Thy blood is my claim and my title, Beside it, O Lord I have none." As in the case of the monk, my mother received the forgiveness of sins and peace with God through trusting in the Saviour who had shed His precious blood on the cross, for the Word of God says: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Before that she had trusted to her religion but discovered that such was an unsound foundation. On her death bed she declared she was trusting only in the precious blood of Christ, just as the Catholic monk had done eight hundred years before, and so *also had our departed friend* we were burying in the sure and certain hope of the glorious resurrection.

They were almost all Catholics but their quiet attention was wonderful. That evening I preached the Gospel in the house of my friend and, as later I journeyed in the train, I realized that "I being in the way, the Lord led me".

9. HYMNS AND SINGING

HYMN-SINGING in English by the congregation at public services is a practice of comparatively recent growth. Only two centuries ago their introduction was the occasion of tumultuous opposition. In Aberdeen such hymns were first heard in the middle of the eighteenth century. They were sung at a church-parade by soldiers temporarily stationed there. The result was violent dispute between those who were devoted to the Calvinist view that only Scripture should be sung in church and the others who wished to introduce other hymns. The former resolved to stop the new practice, now strongly supported by students, and hired youngsters to sit at the front and sing loudly out of tune. The rival factions, "slow singers and quick singers," contended so lustily that the service ended in uproar.

Hymns had indeed been sung in Christian assemblies from the earliest times. It is held by many that Luke 1: 46-54 (the Magnificat), Luke 2: 29-32 (Nunc dimittis), Ephesians 5: 15, 1 Timothy 3: 16, and 6: 15 and 16 were Christian hymns before incorporation in the respective books and epistles. This, however, seems to be almost pure speculation. Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, reporting to the Emperor Trajan on his enquiries concerning the practices of the people called Christians in A.D. 112, informs him that when the Christians assembled they sang hymns to Christ "as to a God." Similar language is used by a third century writer quoted by Eusebius: "hymns and odes such as from the beginning were written by believers, hymns to the

Christ, the Word of God, calling Him God." In the Middle Ages singing of hymns (Greek and Latin), was mainly practised by priests as part of their daily offices.

The Reformation brought a great change, and congregational hymn-singing flourished. Luther composed many hymns, but Calvin permitted only Scripture, mainly the Book of Psalms. In Britain congregational singing was at first confined to Psalms, but eventually hymns were introduced, with events like the one described above. The people of Britain are, therefore, heirs of a hymn-singing tradition which makes hymn-singing as part of Christian worship appear natural. As in other elements of Christian tradition, what now confronts us is a mixture of true and false, Scripture and habit, and a careful examination of the Word is required to enquire what is the place of hymns and singing in the New Testament worship. We shall not, in this place be concerned with the use of hymns in evangelistic work, but will confine ourselves to the part to be played by hymns in the true worship, that is, when the church is "come together in one place" for the purpose of worship.

Three passages deal with the subject of singing. These are:

1. Ephesians 5: 19 (with Colossians 3: 16), illustrated by James 5: 13 and Acts 16: 25.
2. 1 Corinthians 14: 15, perhaps illustrated by Matthew 26: 30 (with Mark 14: 26), and Hebrews 2: 12.
3. Revelation 5: 9, 14: 3, and 15: 3.

1. Ephesians 5: 19, literally rendered, reads "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves (i.e.,

to one another) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your hearts to the Lord." This refers to the Christian life in general, and not particularly to assemblies. It seems to say that Christians are to be, in joy and sorrow, a singing people. It is naturally of great interest to examine the three words, psalms, hymns and songs. On this point, as on so many others, Trench's "Synonyms of the New Testament" is very illuminating. "When some expositors refuse even to attempt to distinguish between them, urging that St. Paul had certainly no intention of classifying the different forms of Christian poetry, this statement, no doubt, is true; but neither, on the other hand would he have used, where there is evidently no temptation to rhetorical amplification, three words, if one would have equally served his turn . . . each must have had a meaning which belonged to it more, and by a better right, than it belonged to either of the others; and this it may be possible to seize, even while it is quite impossible with perfect strictness to distribute under these three heads Christian poetry as it existed in the Apostolic age."

Psalms were, in the Old Testament, songs sung with the accompaniment of plucked instruments. Trench does not doubt that the psalms of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 (and probably 1 Corinthians 14) were the inspired Psalms of the Old Testament Canon. This interpretation, however, we must decisively reject. Naturally all Catholic, Anglican and Reformed (Presbyterian) commentators interpret the word in this sense, and are now bound to do so since for centuries the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament has been sung in their assemblies. If this fact stood alone,

it might be impressive, but it does not stand alone. It is one element in the settled system of carrying over the details of the Old Testament worship into Christianity. In its buildings, its priesthood, its sacrifices, its incense and its music, the historic Church is Judaism carried over: and the use of the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament as a vehicle of Christian worship is one further item in this picture. The Old Testament Psalms cannot be vehicles of the true worship because in them worship is directed to Jehovah and not to the Father and the Son; because a finished redemption was not known; and because the imprecatory Psalms are quite out of keeping with the spirit of the New Testament. For these reasons the psalms of Ephesians 5: 19 cannot be the Psalms of the Old Testament. They must be psalms composed for the purposes of Christian worship.

On hymns, Trench says, "It was the essence of a Greek hymn that it should be addressed to, or otherwise in praise of, a god . . . when the word 'hymn' was assumed into the language of the Church, this essential distinction clung to it still. A 'psalm' might be . . . the story of man's deliverance or a commemoration of mercies received; and of a 'spiritual song' much the same could be said; but a 'hymn' must always be . . . a direct address of praise and glory to God."

A song means anything sung, and "by itself might mean any kind of song, as of battle, or of harvest." The addition of the description "spiritual" means that "they were composed by spiritual men and moved in the sphere of spiritual things."

Perhaps the matter will be best understood if, taking account of the explanations given, but from a slightly different point of view, we

conclude that each of the three words, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, covers the whole range of Christian expression. The first (psalms) draws attention to the fact that Christian feeling expressed itself in compositions which were musical; the second (hymns), that they were in praise of God; and the third (spiritual songs), that also they were sung with the voice.

Some have attempted to make out that since the verb "to psalm", (1 Corinthians 14: 15; Ephesians 5: 19; James 5: 13) is given in a certain popular concordance with the meaning "to sing praise with a musical instrument," it is necessarily implied that instrumental accompaniment is appropriate to singing in Christian worship. It has been so universally common to use instrumental accompaniment with singing in Christian worship that familiarity with it prevents our seeing what a far cry such a practice is from Scripture truth. The verb "to psalm" means "to pluck or twang a string with the finger." In its original use the string was a bowstring, but later a musical string. The only shred of Scripture evidence available to be called in support of using musical accompaniment in Christian worship, is the original meaning of this word, and the evidence is quite as strong for using bows and arrows as musical instruments. The word "lunatic" originally meant a person affected by the phases of the moon, but when we use the word in the twentieth century, we make no reference to the moon; the word is still used, but has entirely lost the original connection. Similarly, the use of the word "to psalm" in the New Testament of itself proves nothing at all about the use of musical instruments. In the Old Testament, instrumental music was explicitly authorised for the temple worship, and considerable

detail given about the instruments used and the players: "an instrument of ten strings" (Psalm 92: 3): "upon the harp will I praise Thee" (Psalm 43: 4): "song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries and harps, for the service of the house of God" (1 Chronicles 25: 6): and numerous other references. When we contrast this with the total absence of such details in the New Testament, it can only be concluded that instruments were not used in the New Testament churches. Indeed, they would hinder by diverting attention from the inward spiritual activity essential to the true worship. The recognition of these facts is not confined to one communion. They have always been recognised by some, notably certain monastic orders in the Middle Ages and by the early Presbyterians in modern times. "Be filled with the Spirit . . . singing and psalming with your hearts" means that in such songs, the player is the Holy Spirit, and His instrument the believer's heart.

2. Whereas Ephesians 5: 19 deals with the Christian's life and behaviour in a general way, 1 Corinthians 14: 15 is on the other hand directly concerned with our theme of collective Christian worship. This is to be understood from its position in the section 11: 17 to 14: 40, commented on in the previous chapter, and also from the close association of singing and blessing or worship. "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say 'Amen' at thy giving of thanks?" Since so much has been said diminishing the importance of the purely musical side of worship, the question will be asked, "Why sing at all?" The answer is that

here in these verses, explicitly in the setting of the true worship, singing is given its place, and this is sufficient answer. Recognition of the supreme place of the Spirit of God in such singing, and attention to the fact that it is to be singing with heart, with the spirit, and with the understanding also, will on the one hand guard against giving undue prominence to the purely musical element, and will also exclude the production of a cacophonous dirge.

3. The third group of passages, dealing with singing in the Revelation, is extremely interesting, confirming as it does that so much of what we have learned in this study of the true worship is symbolised in the vision of the worship of heaven as it passed before the eyes and ears of the seer. The song they sing in heaven is a new song, because it is directed to Him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.

Having thus briefly reviewed the relevant Scripture, we conclude that hymns are required for the true worship. They will have to be new in the sense that every language as it develops needs its own hymns: but they must be old in that their content must be in keeping with all that we have learned about the true worship. It is intensely interesting to consider hymn-books relative to the particular point of substance for the worship of the Father. An inspection of the range of hymn-books available will show that an important part of the unique contribution made by "Hymns for the Little Flock" is that it provides hymns composed for this purpose. It is equally true, and simple justice to acknowledge, that these hymns, under God, are uniquely owed to the work of J. N. Darby and his school. There was, in his long life of labour in the service of Christ, a distinct period in which he became aware of

the absence of, and hence the need for, hymns in English expressing worship to the Father. Time devoted to imbibing the spirit of such hymns will not be spent in vain.

The first great need is that of address, not to Jehovah, not to the Lord only, but to the Father. "I bow my knees unto the Father" (Eph. 3: 14). Along with this goes all joy and peace in believing, which is founded on the assurance of relationship with the Father through the blood of Christ.

Father, Thy name our souls would
bless,

As children taught by grace,
Lift up our hearts in righteousness,
And joy before Thy face.

One of the best examples is by E. H. Chater:

God and Father, we adore Thee,
Now revealed in Christ the Son,
Joying in Thy holy presence
Through the work that He has
done.

Filled with praise we bow before
Thee,

Thou art evermore the same,
With adoring hearts we bless Thee,
Magnify Thy holy name.

Worship, honour, praise and glory,
Would we render unto Thee;
Heights unsearched and depths unfathomed

In Thy wondrous love we see.

Prominent in several of these hymns is the thought of the particular part of the Father, as distinct from those of the Son and the Spirit, in that the Father is the **Source** or Fount of love and of all good.

Blest Father, infinite in grace,
Source of eternal joy;
Thou lead'st our hearts to that
blest place,
Where rest's without alloy.

Or the following verse by E. Rubie :

Our Father, we praise Thee,
Thou source of all blessing,
The Son has revealed Thee
 In fulness of light.
We joy in Thy presence,
We worship before Thee,
In love and all blameless,
 In holiness bright.

The faith and love which realise the place of children with a Father, lead these hymn-writers to move often in the realm of the Father's purposes.

And is it so? we shall be like Thy Son,
 Is this the grace which He for us has won?
Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,
 In glory to His own blest likeness brought.

Perhaps the loveliest are the following two verses from separate hymns by A. Carruthers and T. Willey respectively :

His Father, and our Father,
 His God and ours Thou art;
And He is Thy Beloved,
 The gladness of Thy heart.
We're His, in joy He brings us
 To share His part and place;
To know Thy love and favour,
 The shining of Thy face.

Thine eternal, gracious purpose,
 Now to us in Christ is shewn,
Purpose fraught with richest blessing,
 For the sons Thou hadst fore-known.
Brought to rest within the circle,
 Where love's treasures are displayed,
There we drink the living waters,
 Taste the joys that never fade.

The central theme of the pleasure of the Father in Christ and His sacrifice is embedded in several of the hymns already quoted. It is prominent in Mary Bowly's hymn which begins :

By Thee, O God, invited,
 We look unto the Son,
In whom Thy soul delighted,
 Who all Thy will Hath done;
And by the one chief treasure
 Thy bosom freely gave,
Thine own pure love we measure,
 Thy willing mind to save.

The characteristic and very wonderful burden of J. N. Darby's hymns addressed to the Father is the blissful contemplation of the fulfilment and perfection of the true worship in heaven :

Grateful incense this, ascending
 Ever to the Father's throne;
Ev'ry knee to Jesus bending,
 All the mind in heaven is one.

All the Father's counsels claiming
 Equal honours to the Son,
All the Son's effulgence beaming,
 Makes the Father's glory known.

By the Spirit all pervading,
 Hosts unnumbered round the Lamb,
Crowned with light and joy un fading,
 Hail Him as the great "I AM."

The hymns quoted do not display a general level of high excellence as poetry. Indeed, in his preface to the edition of 1881 Darby wrote, "Something, at least, of the spirit of poetry (is needed for a hymn-book), though not poetry itself, which is objectionable, as merely the spirit and imagination of man." Yet

in spite of himself, his hymns provide several examples of the wedding of the purest spirituality in the fellowship of the Father and the Son with the most exalted expression. Where, in all the realm of hymnody can be equalled these two verses in his hymn beginning "Rest of the saints above"?

But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell,
Where all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb's glories dwell?
God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.

AWAKE OR ASLEEP?

J. STODDART

MANY are the occasions recorded in the Word when God's people were found asleep at the most critical moments. Let us recall some of these here, since such examples were written for our admonition, "we in whose days the ages have reached their climax" (1 Cor. 10: 11, Amp. N.T.).

Samson slept under the enticement of Delilah, and tragically yielded up the secret of his renowned strength to his enemies.

The bride of Canticles slept while her bridegroom was at the door. "I sleep, but my heart waketh," was surely the protest of indifference.

Jonah slept in the midst of a storm occasioned directly by his own disobedience, each somnolent moment carrying him further from the will of God.

Wise and foolish virgins "all slumbered and slept while awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom" (Matt. 25: 5).

In the parable of the tares, it was "while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matt. 13: 25).

At the mount of transfiguration, "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake they saw His glory" (Luke 9: 32). How nearly they missed that incomparable experience!

Hardest of all to believe, did we not know our own hearts, is the record that at Gethsemane in the presence of the Lord's agonising sorrow the disciples slept and slept again (Matt. 26: 43). Only the sympathising Jesus, having urged them to watch, could at length say, "Sleep on now, and take your rest," at such a moment.

Do such examples challenge us as to whether we are awake to the critical character of this our day? Then let us see how we may be admonished and "fitted for right action by good instruction" (1 Cor. 10, 11, Amp. N.T.).

What is it to sleep? Surely it is to be insensible to the true character of things. To sleep is to be inactive and unresponsive to the stirring of the Holy Spirit by the truth of God's Word. To sleep is to indulge

in dreaming fantasy rather than godly exercise, to cling to hollow formalism instead of spiritual vision and practical obedience thereto.

But in every situation that lulls us to sleep there comes the Voice that says, "Awake, O sleeper." To Israel, in Isaiah 52, comes the stirring cry, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." At that moment they are asleep in captivity, having lost their dignity and sunk to the level of the nations around them in grossest idolatry. But with the awakening cry, "Shake thyself from the dust and arise," comes also the call to appreciate "how beautiful are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Deliverance at last has come for the captive people of God and those who have been watching for it "shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." But such a vision, bringing comfort that makes the heart sing for joy, also entails separation from the uncleanness of heathendom and clean vessels are called for in the service of the Lord (v. 11). At the close of Isaiah 52, Israel, now fully awakened and with clarified vision, is directed to behold Jehovah's Servant in all the perfection of His glory (v. 13-15 and 53: 1-12). Christ only comes fully into view when our hearts are awakened from their sleep, and the consequences of that can be clearly seen in these verses.

For us today, comes the salutary reminder that, even with the height of Divine truth revealed in the Ephesian epistle, it is possible to be found asleep as to its grandeur and its claims. So in 5: 14 we have the clarion call, "Wake up, thou that

sleepest and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee." Only then is true separation, divested of legality, effected and "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" results.

Needless to say, the subject of this paper is not physical sleep or awakening, each of which has its proper place in the well-being of mind and body. In this connection it is that the Psalmist says, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety" (Ps. 4: 8) and "so He giveth His beloved sleep" (Ps. 127: 2). Such sleep is necessary and healthful, and without it alertness of mind and spirit are difficult to achieve. But even here Scripture would warn against over-indulgence in bodily slumber, which can lead to direst poverty. See Proverbs 6: 6-11, a study of which will provide a tonic for those troubled with a tendency to somnolence!

Reverting, therefore, to our subject proper, we do well to remember that we live our lives in a world of night and darkness spiritually, and its every influence bids to inoculate the Christian with lethargy. It is thus a timely reminder that is found in 1 Thessalonians 5: 5-7. "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night. . . ." So, as the children's hymn says,

"Many kinds of darkness in this world abound —
Sin and want and sorrow; so we must shine —
You in your corner and I in mine."

We have already said that to sleep is to be spiritually insensible, in-

active and unresponsive. Sometimes oversleep in the physical sense is caused by not knowing the time. This, too, has its counterpart in the spiritual realm and would seem to be the imagery used in Romans 13: 11, 12. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us, therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The alarm has sounded in no uncertainty — in the prodigious accomplishments and equally prodigious fears of modern man, as he trembles at the spectre

of the end product of his own achievement. The midnight cry has long since sounded and "daybreak is at hand," the dawning of that "morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23: 4) shall soon greet us and "the shadows shall flee away" (Cant. 2: 17).

Let us awake, therefore, to hail the Bright and Morning Star and to expect the glorious moment when "the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4: 2). Let us not sleep as did the disciples in the blaze of His glory on the mount, but rather remember that "when they were awake they say His glory."

THE TIMOTHEAN DOXOLOGIES

A. H. STORRIE

AS is well-known, Paul's is the Gospel of the divine glory. "The glory of that light" seen on the Damascus road never failed to give charter to his ministry: ". . . the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted" (1 Tim. 1: 10). The erstwhile "blasphemer and persecutor, and insolent overbearing man" who had obtained mercy, became the living delineation of the glory of the grace that saved him, the chief of sinners. Cultured, highly educated, a deeply religious zealot, his would have been a brilliant career on the human level, but the human became as nothing in the light of the divine.

We should remember that Paul's pastoral epistles were addressed to individuals: Timothy and Titus, and not to churches. They give his

final words of counsel to his two sons in the faith, words mellow with the wisdom of age, for the human element enters into divine inspiration. Every word of his written ministry, his warnings and his exhortations as to sound doctrine are to be carefully pondered. Ere long his rising soul reaches a sublime height of worship. How magnificent and inspiring is his first doxology! "Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen" (1: 17, N.T.).

The subject of prayer comes first in chapter 2. Is the exhortation of verse 1 always acted on in our assembly prayer meetings? And let us not forget that it was made when one of the vilest despots that ever disgraced a nation sat on the throne of the Caesars.

Like all God's standards, it is a high one that is set for the "overseer" or bishop in the local church or assembly (chapter 3). And let us ever remember that God dwells in His assembly on earth, "the pillar and base of the truth," and that great is the mystery of piety. Wholeheartedness has a great place in all the Scriptures. And note how the maintenance of a good conscience is stressed by the apostle, for it is only thus that communion with God can also be maintained. How good it is to see that even a young believer like Timothy may be exhorted to be a model to others in word, manner of life, love, faith and purity (chapter 4).

Chapters 5 and 6 concern themselves chiefly with the "work of a good minister of Jesus Christ." And how desirable it surely is to be a "man of God" — entirely devoted to God — such as Elijah and Elisha of Old Testament days. Be it ours to flee the undesirable, to pursue the desirable and to fight the good fight of faith. Soldiers usually fight best when they know they are under a good commander and on the winning side. May our Great Captain of Salvation, who has never known defeat, command us. The apostle looked far beyond all earthly kingdoms however great. With what abounding ecstasy he must have indited his second doxology! ". . . the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own time the blessed and only Ruler shall show, the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship: Whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; to Whom be honour and eternal might. Amen."

The expression, "Second Timothy days," is usually accompanied by a sad tone of voice and not by an animating smile; but why the despondency? Was spiritual declen-

sion any less when at a later date the following words flowed from the pen of the aged apostle John early in his first epistle? "These things we write to you that your joy may be full" (1 John 1: 4). What are the men of God's resources for the present days? Are they all of a negative nature? Considered free from preconceived ideas, 2 Timothy is a most touching and encouraging epistle. And the doxology at its close, although brief, doubtless dominated the writer's mind all through. The glory of God was his constant and undeviating aim. Bring faith in, and problems, however difficult and trying, shrink to their proper proportions: "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion" (1: 7). Space forbids us to take more than a few thoughts from the remaining chapters. Timothy was to "stir into a flame" (R.V.) the gift of God which was in him (1: 6). Our Lord is the mighty Conqueror and He has annulled death. Timothy, weak in himself, was to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2: 1) — an inexhaustible fount, "given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time . . ." (1: 9). Man's day mattered little to Paul: "I know Whom I have believed. . . ."

In chapter 2 the soldier, the athlete and the husbandman each have their word for us as to patient endurance. And in view of any departure from divine and revealed truth, what a confirming word is verse 19: "Yet the firm foundation of God stands. . . ." And the individual believer is to depart from unrighteousness just as in the days of Job, David and Solomon, in whose writings we have almost identical exhortations (Job 28: 28; Psa. 34: 14, 37: 27; Pro. 3: 7, 16: 6) — a matter of personal holiness

rather than one of ecclesiastical procedure. And what a guard we have against falling away in the last days: the God-breathed Scriptures! (3: 15-17). It is the **Word** we have to preach — not our own ideas about it, for positive truth refutes every form of error. And if our manner of life is inconsistent with our doctrine, the latter avails little.

And now the Lord's faithful and zealous servants arduous labours near their end (Chapter 4): "For

I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come. I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Then he raises his eyes to the radiant glory as he closes his last contributions to the Sacred Writings: "The Lord shall . . . preserve me for His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for the ages of the ages. Amen." And meanwhile, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

ELIJAH IN THE CONFLICT

R. THOMSON

I KINGS 18

WHETHER by famine or conflict, the servant of God will be tested, and the Lord's grace and power in all circumstances proved. The famine is trial of hunger and thirst from within; the conflict, that which comes from without, the power of the adversary. For the one, God's sufficiency is fully declared to faith; and in the other, His supremacy is revealed over every opposing force, however great or numerous it may be. The Word of the Lord can always be relied upon as the unfailing guide for His servants, whether in a time of famine, or the testing of conflict. However, let us not think that His command is the same on every occasion; for He knows the circumstances for the moment, and gives suited direction for every movement. The word to Elijah at the beginning of the famine was "Hide thyself;"

now, the command from the Lord is, "Shew thyself," which is equally fitting and perfect for a fresh scene of faithfulness.

The idolatrous nation of Israel had been severely tested in the famine, and every little show of faithfulness from individuals toward God is recorded by Him. Obadiah, whose name means "worshipper of Jehovah," feared the Lord greatly, although an overseer in Ahab's house. Not only this, but he had hidden and fed one hundred prophets of the Lord, whose very existence was threatened by Jezebel, the wife of Ahab. This was no mean task for Obadiah, seeing that the days of famine were hard upon Samaria and Israel.

It is very interesting to see that Elijah first met Obadiah, even before having to do with Ahab. The Lord was giving His servant-prophet

some little encouragement from Obadiah, who called him, "My lord Elijah," and fervently declared that he feared the Lord from his youth. Also, he told him that he had been the means of preserving the lives of one hundred prophets of the Lord, by feeding them with bread and water! To Obadiah, the word of Elijah would be equally encouraging, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him (Ahab) to-day." The end of the famine was in sight.

As prophet and king meet, the charge by Ahab against Elijah is, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Truly, the famine had been a great trial to the nation, and had been sent of Jehovah for a definite reason. This cause is given in the reply of the prophet to Ahab, in a twofold accusation "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim" (v. 18). Here we see the abomination in the sight of God, apostasy and idolatry in the king's household, and the nation following the lead given by the king.

The stage is now to be set for the declaration of the evil, and the good; and the public manifestation of the powerlessness of Baal, and the great power of Jehovah. Mount Carmel is chosen by Elijah for the scene of conflict, which means, "The fruitful field." All of Israel are to be called, for this is a matter of deep concern for everyone. Also, the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal must be present, shewing the extent of the force used to impose idolatry upon the people. As thus assembled, Elijah announced to all the people that the time had come when they could no longer halt between two opinions. "If Jehovah

be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."

The question of the true God must be settled; and Elijah, working for God, and with God, gives instructions as to what shall be done. The people must provide two bullocks: one to be for a sacrifice for Baal, and one to be for Elijah. Baal must choose one, cut it in pieces and lay on wood, but put no fire under. Then they were to call upon their god to answer by fire. Elijah would do the same with his bullock, calling upon the Name of the Lord. The God that answered by fire would be the **true God**. To this, the people consented, saying that the word was good. Now we come to the conflict, and the battle is set in array. The forces are eight hundred and fifty prophets, with Baal; and one prophet, with God. Outwardly and numerically, Baal may seem to have the ascendancy; but in reality, one man in touch with God and His power, must have the victory. The antics of the Baal worshippers bring neither answer nor result from their god. Elijah taunts them to greater zeal, until the whole scene becomes an orgy of fleshly endeavour, with no voice or hearing from Baal. This continued until the time of the offering up of the evening sacrifice, when the moment came for Elijah to call upon the Lord.

Let us consider the steps of this man of God's prayer to Jehovah in the hour of trial, imploring Him to answer for the glory of His Name. The evening sacrifice, which had been instituted at the time of the consecration of Aaron and his sons, together with the offering of the morning sacrifice, was to ascend to God continually as a sweet savour. This was the hour of action for Elijah, and he appealed to the people to draw near him. Evidently, in Baal worship, a distance had to

be observed. They obeyed and drew nigh, whereupon Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord which had been broken down, taking twelve stones to signify the whole of Israel. All is done in relation to the Lord; for we have the altar of the Lord, the word of the Lord, which came to the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob, and the Name of the Lord put upon the altar. Everything is performed in beautiful order, for the glory of His great Name. A trench is dug around the altar, the wood is put in order, and the bullock is cut in pieces and laid on the wood. Twelve barrels of water are then poured upon the sacrifice, so that it is not only sodden, but the trench is filled with water.

At the hour of sacrifice, Elijah drew near, and called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, the covenant keeping God Who delighted in the blessing of His redeemed people. Notice what he said, and his attitude as the servant of God. "Thou art God in Israel" — His supremacy is owned. "I am thy servant" — subjection. "I have done all these things at thy word" — obedience. "Turn their heart back again" — supplication. God answered the voice of His servant, and the fire came down from Himself to consume the burnt sacrifice, along with the wood, stones and dust, and licked up the water in the trench. It was victory indeed! This divine power was irresistible, for God was declaring Himself as the only true God. This was a great sight for the people, who fell on their faces saying, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." Truly His righteousness had been vindicated, and the glory of His Name had been maintained. The judgment of the prophets of Baal must follow. Elijah brings

them to the brook Kishon, where they are slain, and the routing of the enemy is completed.

What now of the servant of God! What is his attitude in the hour of triumph? He speaks to Ahab of the providence of God, saying, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." So while king Ahab rose up to eat and drink, Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel to pray. What a lovely attitude for the man of God, in the flush of victory! Bowed to the earth, with his face between his knees, he is directed to the One in the heavens, Who is the source and means of blessing. Everything is clear to the man of faith, but the servant of Elijah, sent to look up toward the sea, can see nothing. He must go seven times, and the seventh time revealed a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand.

God is working toward a glorious climax, and has decreed that His pleasure shall prosper in the Man of His counsel. The love of the Father has been expressed upon Jesus, in manhood, and He has given all things into His hand. This is now established in Christ's resurrection and ascension to glory, and from the heavens that glorious Man will be the blessed administrator of all the fulness of God. Those hands, which were once nailed to the tree, are now outstretched in blessing upon His own, as when He ascended at Bethany. This we know by belonging to Him as His sheep, for we are in His hands and can never perish.

Finally, the word to Ahab was, "Get thee down," and the proud, idolatrous king is humbled as he goes down to Jezreel, the place of scattering and sowing in the midst of judgment. For Elijah, however, the hand of the Lord was upon him to lift up; for he girded up his loins,

and ran before Ahab into Jezreel. The man of God is sustained in the power of victory; and we can say

even in our day, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

ON THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

J. C. M. HARKNESS

THIS short epistle coming at the end of the general epistles of the New Testament has for its main theme the widespread declension of the professing Church. The writer depicts in the most vivid and forceful language how "ungodly men have turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." This is actually happening in the professing Church today. And yet, there is found in this short epistle much encouragement for the heart true to Christ in the midst of all the confusion around and it is on this side of the picture these few notes dwell.

Verse 2 says: "Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied" — Note first of all it says "multiplied" not just merely added. Every school child knows how much greater multiplication is than addition. Add 100 to 100 and you have 200, but multiply 100 by 100 and you have 10,000! But in this verse there is no limiting figure. It says mercy, grace and peace are to be multiplied ad infinitum. There is no limit to the mercy, grace and peace God gives to the true Christian. These gifts of God are inexhaustible and eternal. The question may well be asked how do we with all our manifest weaknesses and failures enter into the enjoyment of these blessings? The answer is found in

verses 20 and 21 of this epistle. Here we find four things the continuous practice of which enables us, in our measure and to the degree in which we use them, to enter into the deep spiritual joys of mercy, peace and love.

First, "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." How necessary is this for our spiritual health! The question we have to ask ourselves is, have I this day added a brick to the structure of my spiritual life and my knowledge of the Lord and His goodness? Has some fresh thought of His greatness and of His love enabled me to appreciate Him better? If so, something has been gained that we shall never lose. But all must be based on the fundamentals of our "holy faith."

Second, "Praying in the Holy Ghost." How essential is prayer to the Christian life, the expression of our utter and complete dependence on divine guidance and the need of being kept humble in this knowledge, and this is not just "saying prayers" but "praying in the Holy Ghost," He Who "helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Third, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Here, we perhaps break down most. What a differ-

ence it would make were we always in the current of the love of God! What a calming and strengthening of our spirits, that would be felt by all with whom we come in contact! It has been beautifully expressed in a verse written by E. L. Bevin:

“Our God and Father, may our
souls repose
In the deep sense of Thine unfailing
love,
Kept by Thy peace in Him Who
died and rose
Till we are gathered to Thy rest
above.”

What a devotion and fervour, a tenderness and sympathy towards others would be manifest in our lives were we more keeping ourselves in the love of God or rather allowing Him to keep us there!

Fourth, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Here is our forward look and the blessed hope which buoys us up above what would keep us down and discouraged. Things here and now would not have the power to shake us as they sometimes do, were we in the enjoyment of this “bright and blessed hope.”

Nor are these four things all we have for our encouragement if we do but practice them. There are also four things outlined in verse 24 which the Lord Himself is doing and is going to do for us, which are set out for our encouragement and blessing.

First, He “is able to keep you from falling” — How blessed to know there is that keeping power ever over us and that whatever happens that “underneath are the everlasting arms!”

Second, That we shall be “pre-

sented faultless” — Can this be so, that we with all our manifest failings, our sins of omission and of commission are to be presented blameless? Such is the power of His might and such is His redeeming grace that this is so blessedly true!

Third, “Before the presence of His glory” — Who can tell what is contained in the phrase “the presence of His glory?” His glory as the Son of God, as the Son of man, as the Saviour and Redeemer of men, as the One by Whom and for Whom all things were made, as the brightness of the glory of God, as the Way, the Truth and the Life, as the One before Whom every knee must bow, as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. The theme is inexhaustible. The contemplation of Him can only lead us to bow our hearts to worship Him Who is worthy of all honour and praise.

Fourth, “With exceeding joy” — Here we have in the manifestation of the glory of our Lord a joy that must exceed anything we have ever known in this earthly life. Every sincere Christian must know something of the joy of the Lord in his heart, but here is something that exceeds anything we have known or can know.

“If here on earth the thoughts of
Jesus' love
Lift our poor hearts this weary
world above,
If even here the taste of heavenly
springs
So cheers the spirit, that the pilgrim
sings,
What will the sunshine of His glory
prove?
What the unmingled fullness of His
love?”

What Hallelujahs will His presence raise?

What but one loud, eternal burst of praise?

The last verse of our epistle is the fitting response: "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."

O B E D I E N C E

HENRY HOWITT

ON one occasion when the Lord was speaking to His disciples He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14: 15). In the same discourse He reiterated the same words, making it abundantly clear that the essential characteristic of a true disciple is obedience.

A person who is not a Christian does not know or understand God, and hence he is not prepared to accept His authority. He is not willing to believe God's Word, or obey His commandments. The fundamental trouble with natural man is that he chooses to go his own way, and rebels against the will of God.

It was an act of disobedience that brought sin into the world in the first place, and estranged man from God. Disobedience meant man's departure from God, and marks a person who is not a Christian, whereas obedience is the means by which we return to God, and ought to mark every true Christian.

This presents a challenge to us, when we examine our lives, and consider the extent to which they are lived in simple obedience to God's will as revealed in His Word. In becoming Christians we have obeyed the gospel, and shown faith in God, by accepting Christ as our Saviour.

By this act we have committed the eternal welfare of our souls to God, and yet we must regretfully admit that there are times when we are not prepared to trust Him in some of the smaller issues relating to our daily lives. Why is it that we are not prepared to obey the simple injunctions of scripture, without first examining them, to see if they still apply to us in this present day, or else questioning the reason for them? "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8), and the fact that we do not fully understand them should not prevent us from obeying them. It is not a matter of advocating that we go blindly on, but that we should not let intellectual difficulties, or man's wisdom, turn us aside from the pathway of obedience to God. If we do not understand anything we can always pray for enlightenment for our understanding.

The obedience which God requires is not mere adherence to the letter of scripture, it is something far deeper than this. He requires a life lived in every respect in accord with His will. We are told, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15: 22).

Whenever we are exhorted to do anything, or display a particular virtue, we can always find it exemplified in Christ. Considering obedience, could there be a more perfect example than that found in Christ, Who could say, "I do always those things that please him (the Father)" (John 8: 29), "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6: 38), "Not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22: 42) and many other similar words expressing His Father's will, all being confirmed by every action that He did. The climax of His life of obedience was when He faced Calvary's cross, and there contemplating all the agony that lay before Him, He bowed in simple subjection to His Father's will. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5: 19).

There are many outstanding examples in the scriptures of men and women, who were marked by such a faith, that their lives were lived in unquestioning obedience to God. Abraham was one of these whose obedience is recorded in the letter to the Hebrews. It says of him, "When he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11: 8). He also was prepared to sacrifice his only son, in

whom all God's promises to him were to be fulfilled. He had implicit faith in God, which led to unhesitating obedience.

The apostle Paul sums up his object in his letter to the Corinthians, where he says that his wish is to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10: 5). It was his desire that this might not only be true of himself, but of all those he preached to. Paul likens the struggle he had to achieve this to warfare, the spiritual forces of evil contending with God for man's allegiance. There are many subtle ways in which we can be hindered in our Christian lives, and prevented from giving complete obedience to the Lord. We are presented with numerous pursuits and interests, which are seemingly harmless in themselves, but we constantly need to guard that these are kept in correct perspective, and are governed by our overriding allegiance to Christ.

The extent of our obedience is a measure of our love and appreciation of Christ. The Lord said "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15: 14). May we all covet the Lord's commendation when our lives are reviewed, "Well done, thou good and faithful (or obedient) servant" (Matt. 25: 21).

YOUR EVERYDAY JOB

P. H. HIRST

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT CHELTENHAM 1963

(Genesis 1: 26-28; 2: 15-17; 3: 16-19. Colossians 3: 22-24)

FIVE days from now we shall be away from Cheltenham and shall have to work out this business of full-time Christian service in our everyday lives in the cold light of next Monday morning. There is great danger of sowing seeds of spiritual trouble if, while we think of the wonders of the spiritual work to which God has called us, we do not see this in relation to the job we shall then be doing. So, because that job occupies our thoughts and time and energies for the majority of our waking hours, we want to look at the question of the relationship between our everyday jobs and Christian service.

My subject is work. To talk about this is a very difficult matter because Christians do take very different points of view on this. But we must get this clear. There are some terrible tensions brought about in people's living because they do not see the place that their everyday work has in their Christian service. They think of their job as their job, and their Christian service as done in their leisure. This is rather an extraordinary inversion of values, that one's spare time is given to the service of God, and one's work is secular. Our jobs are necessary and no more. That we have to work for our living to keep body and soul together is obvious, but beyond this our work has no significance or spiritual value. Some Christians do indeed take this view that our spiritual life is something quite separate from our work, and there is a complete split between the secular and the Christian. Other Christians see this as a flat contradiction to the

Word of God. How can Christ be Lord of all our lives in fact if we maintain a split of this kind? The majority of us drift somewhere down the middle. We have a job which we do honestly and decently. We take the best pay they will give us for this and we are quite prepared to admit that we do not really do it very much better than the next man. We try to forget about the problem and not to fit our work squarely into the pattern of our service for God as it ought to be fitted.

There are two points to be amplified by the rest of what I have to say. First, that work, or our job, is not an unfortunate necessity while in this world. According to God's word, it is not simply something to get us through keeping body and soul together. Second, that it is asserted in Colossians 3: 24 that it is the service of Christ.

Now I want in amplification to begin by giving a thumbnail sketch of the development in the Scriptures of the attitude of God and man to work. In some respects this may produce disagreement, nevertheless I think it is worth suggesting. So I want to look first at Genesis 1: 26-28. In the creation it is clear that God gave man a context for a life to God's glory. He set the whole bounds for his living, the whole function of man, the whole job he was to do in the world, in two particular respects, to act as pivotal points for the whole of his life. These were stated when God gave to man the mandates, as they are sometimes described. He was told first of all to be fruitful and multiply. The first mandate is about man's rela-

tions, amplified in the first statement in this Scripture. The second mandate is that it was the function of man to subdue the world, to have dominion, to dress and keep the garden, in other words, to do a job, to work. To subdue and to have dominion means that man was put into the world to control it, to order it, to use it. To what end? To the glory of God and for the fulfilment of his own nature; and he was to do the whole thing as a task given to him by God, to find his fulfilment in fellowship with God during this great task which God had committed to him to do.

Three points are to be noted in these creation mandates for man's life. First, work is part of the fundamental pattern of life for man, and that this has nothing at all to do with the fall. Second, the essence of the job given to man was to use his abilities and his talents to order, to subdue, and to have dominion over every creature. Third, for this purpose man is given intellectual abilities, his interests in nature, and all his desires to understand, to explore, and to control the world in which he lives. The whole of this was because in doing it man was to have communion with God, was to fulfil God's will and to be serving Him and in that was to be his own greatest good.

Now what happened at the fall from this point of view? The fall consists, does it not, in the very context of life that he had been given, this very task for the glory of God, in using this and perverting it to his own ends. To exert dominion over the world himself he wanted to know, by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He wanted to be as God; he was tempted to that end, so that all the skills and abilities he had got, went, not to the glory of God, but his own place in creation, to satisfy himself and to rule and to

subdue the world and have dominion over it for his own ends, to pervert culture of the world to the glory of God, to culture to his own tastes, to his own desires. We see how this perversion of man's interests and desires to know and to rule and to control the world is judged by God in the passage that I read, by a curse which covers both aspects of the original mandate. When man corrupted the world and the life which he had to live for God, God did not scrap it all. He did not change the whole context of man's life, so that he should just live as an animal and not do work and should have no children. The context of man's living, the pivotal points of man's living, were not touched at all in that sense. They were not changed. Man did not become an animal, nor did he become a devil, a quite different creature of God. He remained a man, set in this world within this mandate set by God, but since he had corrupted it, perverted the whole intention of it, God passed judgment. He cursed the ground so that his work now would be hard and frustrated, that it would be in pain, in toil, in hardship. Similarly on the mandate to be fruitful and multiply, the judgment was that there would be pain, toil, and frustration too.

And so, I suggest that from this section we see these three things: first, that work is not in any sense changed as one of the fundamental jobs, functions of man in the world. Secondly, that remaining, that being reaffirmed as one of the pivotal points of man's life, there is on it the judgment of God in that now it involves toil and frustration and difficulty and pain. And thirdly, man's abilities and skills and man's wonderful gifts from God are seen to be perverted to explore the world and to control it with the passion in

which we see men doing it today, warping the whole thing to their own lusts and their own desires, and corrupting what should have been something magnificent for the display of the glory of God and man's fellowship with God into something bestial and evil and fundamentally opposed to all God's glory and all God's blessing to man.

But this having happened we discover in the Old Testament that God does not leave man just as he is with the whole of his life, as it were, a matter of frustration. No, God calls man to His service, and in the commandments of Moses we see now a new element brought into this. But what are these commandments that were to set the bounds of man's life at that period? They consisted of religious acts, rituals, acts of worship and adoration of God, acts of sacrifice, acts where they did the specific service of God committed to them. But if you take the commandments, that set down the stage of how man at that time could live to the glory of God, it does not just consist of man doing religious ritual. It consists at the same time of commandments on how he is to live in his work: "Six days shalt thou labour." The mandates are now reaffirmed and it is stated that man shall live in this way working in the world; and in the same way the commandments are reaffirmed about his relationship with his family and his relationship with society. Into this scene, which has been corrupted in its intention, there has come this specific call of God. Man is to serve Him, but his work and his social life and his relations with others are to be harmonious with this. The strongest moral planks were put down in the commandments as to how he could live this life, how he could fulfil the commandments to work, and to be fruitful and multiply, how

he could live in these relations, and do this harmoniously with the service of God. These pivotal points should be rooted stably in his daily activity, that his energies might from these and through these go to the service of God in the specific ways which God commanded.

We now come to the Christian period. What is the situation now, when a man is born again and receives new life from God, spiritual life? What now is going to be the situation, because it is not the same as under the commandments of Moses? De we again make possible the situation that God says to man, "You are a new sort of creation of mine. You are a sort of angel. You are a sort of superman. You are a sort of spiritual thing I have created that is not a man at all, and all these mandates of work and of family life are really not your life though you may have to carry on doing them. You are really now a new spiritual something, in a sort of capsule. The life of man in the world is something extraneous to this. This spiritual growth and health depend on communion with God, and the service of God, and the rest has got nothing to do with it." Certainly not; we find no such thing, because if we turn to the moral teaching of the epistles of the New Testament, we find that once more the work of the service of God is rooted fundamentally in work to the glory of God and in a pattern of family and social life that shall be equally to His glory, that is in keeping with Him. Work and the family are the setting of the stage of every form of human life that is pleasing to God because it is part of the constitution of man. God put these feelings, these desires, these tastes, these abilities into us when He created us.

All this has to be kept straight if we are ever to serve God acceptably

in these specific ways of witness and preaching and teaching that He has committed to us. The new life is all of a whole. It is moral; it is spiritual; it is all in the service of God. There is no part of it that is not. And the normal everyday relations and the way we live them and the way we treat our work are the platform of the service of God, because we are part of this reconciled world. We are new men, part of the new creation of God. But we are new *men*, and we have work, literal jobs to do in this world because this is the context in which God has set us and called us to do it for His glory. And so I would suggest that we are called as new men here to *be* witnesses in everything that others see us do and say, and thereby be ambassadors for Christ in this world.

Now I want to make this just a little more explicit as far as the New Testament is concerned. Both negatively and positively, the New Testament affirms that we are to work and that we are to serve God in our work. Two passages do so negatively. In 2 Thessalonians 3 the apostle Paul talks about Christians withdrawing themselves from certain other people who are enemies of the faith, denying the Christian faith. But what is wrong with these people? Do they hold some false teaching? Haven't they got their theology right? No. What is wrong with these people is that they do not want to work, and from them we are enjoined to withdraw. Why? Because they are denying one of the planks of Christian life, one of the fundamental roots of our moral living through which we are to be here for the service of God. Again we get very strong words in 1 Timothy 5 against a man who will not work to provide for his family. He describes such people in the strongest terms saying that they are worse than in-

fidels, as if it were basic to the whole conception of a universe that belongs to God that a man should work, that his relationship to his job and to his family, both of them put together here, should be right.

Positively, this truth is found in Colossians, which I read, and equally in Ephesians 6. The passage in Colossians 3: 22 is, in fact, addressed to slaves, and these slaves are enjoined to their service. Imagine what their service was; domestic may be, or manual labour, but their service is, in fact, to be done as to Christ. He does not leave it like this: as if you were doing it unto Christ. Your job is the service of Christ. It is not just a question of your attitude, it is a question of seeing what it is, that it is part of the Christian's basic function in this world.

From these passages then, I suggest three things about work from the Christian point of view. First, that it is essential to the Christian life, an essential element of living to the glory of God in this world. It is, in fact, part of a whole life service of a man to God. Secondly, that God has never removed this mandate from man and I see no indication that He is ever going to do it as long as we are in this world, men with bodies and souls and spirits. We have intellectual abilities, we have physical skills and they are created and given to us as men inhabiting a world. How they will be related to our constitution in the world to come when there is a new heaven and a new earth and we are new men with new bodies, I don't know. But I do know that as we are constituted now for that day, our abilities, our skills have their place and their function as appropriate to the world in which we live, as working here in the service of God. Thirdly, that though, in fact, this world is under a curse, though we have sin in

ourselves, and there is no question of a return to innocence, and of the Christian returning to the original state in the Garden of Eden, and doing things for the glory of God in that way, nevertheless, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as a man did live in this world with all its social set-up, with all its culture organised for the glory of man. He did live to the glory of God, as a man, and we are called to do just that in our service, following in His footsteps.

What does this mean then for our jobs as such? We must try to give some biblical perspective on this. I want now to say a few words about the quite specific matter of my attitude to my job.

The first thing is that the scriptures make it clear that it is a *calling*. This word is used in 1 Corinthians 7: 20 in a context where slaves are referred to, so let us have no idea that callings are professional things. It is not the case that a professional man has a vocation because he is a professional man and that a labourer has not, because he has not a profession. The slaves were to remain in the callings in which they were called and in them *with God*, a very telling phrase. So, the first point is that for everyone of us our job is a calling and very much in contrast to the world's idea of a career. The whole attitude to these is different. If it is a calling of God, what concerns you as a Christian is to discover the will of God. Not how you can build yourself a career, but how you may realise the calling of God to a place in this world to serve Him. This means that you need the personal guidance of God for your job, so that by sober reflection before God, on the gifts that He has given you, as suited to a function in this world, according to your abilities, according to your circumstances, according to the responsi-

lities you have, and with His guidance, to discern where He calls you to work for Him in everyday life. It means, in fact, that you are doing the job to God's glory. It is His vocation, to be done for Him. It is not a career, the whole essence of which is that it gives status, position, achievement, to the person who goes in for it.

The second thing I suggest is (to use an Americanism) that the motivation is quite different; what makes you tick in your job is quite different. You are not working for money. You are not working for yourself. You are not, in fact, working for your boss. You are working for Christ. And this puts a very different picture on it, that the motive behind your deeds, the motive behind the way you work, is because this is part of your service for God. You are doing it with a purpose, with a seriousness, with an integrity and a soberness that means you realise the whole significance of this job in your life as God has called you to live it for His glory.

Thirdly, the standards that you work by will not be those set by your mates, and will not be those set by your boss. I cannot myself reconcile this conception of work, with anything short of working to your absolute ceiling, to the height of your ability. I do not see how it is consistent with the Christian life unless you do this. This is very relevant to the kind of work that we do, that we have a job that is appropriate to our abilities because it seems to me that it is very difficult to conceive of a job that is, in fact, being done in this full time service for Christ as unto Him, unless it is one which is in suitable proportion to our abilities.

Fourthly, the scriptures believe in hard work — quite honest, solid,

hard work. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. That means that no Christian in his job should ever be accused of anything short of being an incredibly hard worker, because this is what he is doing to the glory of God.

Fifthly, I suggest that it means that you care terribly about your job and its relations to other people, how it affects them, how what you do fits in with the next person. It won't be a thing that is no concern to you. You do it seeing where it fits with others, the influence it has on other people, the significance it has for other people and that your relationship to your boss and to your mates in doing this, will in fact be one which will be glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That brings me to the very last part of what I want to say. Not only is your job, because it is part of the basic life of the Christian, one of the moral foundations of Christian living, lived to the glory of God, it is also quite clearly a sphere to which we are called to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are doing a job in this sense, we are bearing witness to the kind of life that a person that has been born of God lives in this kind of world and how the whole of their life becomes transformed by the wonderful power of God.

I just want to say one or two words about witness and our jobs. This is the most potent field of witness one can possibly imagine. In our modern world, a great deal of the effective evangelism that is going on, goes on round the two pivotal points we see in Genesis originally, family life and the way it is conducted, and your job and your witness to men in it. Where are the people in our halls? Who listens to our preaching half the time we

preach? But the people next to you, see you every day of your lives. They see everything you do, and there you are being a witness, I hope. Whether or not you *bear* witness is a further matter, but a very important one. But you should *be* a witness. This, I'm sure in the modern world is one of the most powerful and potent ways in which God calls us to His service, to witness in the everyday job which you are given to do. But we must remember one important matter if we are to be effective in this, and that is that our contacts with the people we work with, are long-term. Because they see us day in and day out, they often know us better than we know ourselves, and there is nothing like living with a person to see whether his whole life cancels out all he says. This is a terribly important matter. We must be very careful that what we say is borne out by our lives twenty-four hours of the day, and we should be living out what we are claiming, that our lives are indeed examples of men who are reconciled to God. And if this is so, what happens is not that we draw attention to ourselves as being odd, or peculiar, or anything of this kind. We will be seen to be different because we care about people, because we care about our work, because we care about the things that go on around us and that we are there to serve God in everything, in our job and in our relations with people. From this they will see that we are different, not that we are odd, but that there is something so *good* about us (a terrifying thing, but that is what it is going to be) that they want to know why. They are captured by the kind of life you live, and how it comes that you live that sort of life. There are a lot of people in the world today who are quite honestly agnostic. They just

don't believe that the Christian faith has got anything to say, and talk is not the thing that will convince them. What will convince them is your life, the way you live and from that, bearing witness to them. And one is called to witness in one's job, because talk, preaching alone, is in many, many cases, as it were, too far advanced. They are not even at the stage where preaching can speak to them. People need to be persuaded that the Christian life is serious, that it works, and that it calls men

to the service of God and produces in them fruit which is not to be found elsewhere.

I cannot stop without just asking how many of us here will be back to work in this sense next Monday morning? At that point you are not to forget Cheltenham. The call of God is just as strong to you then, as it is when on the previous day you may be serving Him in the gospel. We are called to full-time service, and that includes all our work.

THE TRUE WORSHIP

J. S. BLACKBURN

10. "IN SPIRIT" AND "BY THE SPIRIT"

THE essentially spiritual nature of the activity called the true worship must now be given special consideration. One of the most renowned stories of the ancient world is that of how Pompey, commissioned from Rome by the Senate to pacify the East, came from his victory over the Seleucid to Jerusalem. While there, he insisted, against all the entreaties of a terrified priesthood, on entering the temple's inner sanctuary. He approached the curtains. He was about to encounter the most famous god of the ancient world, Jehovah of Israel, in His shrine. With sword drawn, he pulled aside the curtains, and found — nothing! The sanctuary was empty. Alone all along the temples of the world, there was no idol or image in the Temple of Jehovah. Although for the time then present, His dwelling place was a house of stone and gold, of beauty and glory, it was even then true that God is a spirit; and when the true worship came, the splendour of an earthly

sanctuary would disappear, and that worship is seen to be an entirely spiritual activity.

Two sentences in particular present the essential spirituality of the true worship: John 4: 24, "they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit" ("in truth" has been previously considered): and Philippians 3: 3, "worship by the Spirit of God" (R.V.). The former expression, "in spirit," presents the location or *place* of the true worship in distinction from Jerusalem or Gerizim: "by the Spirit of God" states the unique *power* for it.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Thus the woman poses the question, in what *place* should men worship? In His immediate answer Jesus makes two distinctions. He distinguishes the Jewish from the Samaritan worship in that the former was in an important sense a genuine worship of the God of the Bible, based on a real knowledge of

that God revealed: whereas the latter was a spurious worship based on ignorance of God. Jesus also distinguishes both these — at Jerusalem and Gerizim — from the worship for which the hour had already struck, when the true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the Jewish and Samaritan worship were alike in that they both consisted in a system of priesthood and sacrifice, but at this moment we concentrate on the fact that they had also in common the idea of an earthly location solely appropriate to worship. The Lord's answer sweeps away the whole concept of an earthly sanctuary, even when, as at Jerusalem, it had been for former times the ordinance of Jehovah the God of Israel.

The Jewish Christians addressed in Hebrews were taunted with having no priest, no sanctuary, no altar. The Spirit of God, in that epistle does not answer that priests *would* appear with garments of glory and beauty; that earthly sanctuaries of imposing magnificence and valid sanctity *would* eventually appear for the Christian company. He replies that they did already possess a High Priest, never to be superseded, but He was in heaven, and hence not visible on earth at all: they did possess an altar, but of an entirely spiritual kind. In answer to the woman's question, the Saviour did not say that the day would dawn when Malines Cathedral would be built (and all the churches from the humblest village church to St. Peter's itself); He spoke of the hour already come, when the place of the true worship would be in human spirits, born of the Spirit, and where the well of the Spirit would be springing up into everlasting life. With these words He obliterated for ever the whole notion of an earthly sanctu-

ary, and firmly and finally located the true worship in the spirits of redeemed men and women.

The reason for this is given. It is that God is a spirit, and the worship of their hearts must answer to the nature of God. In the previous chapter of this Gospel it is said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What, in the believer, is born of God, is not of the nature of flesh, but of spirit; it does not belong to the material part of man, but to the spiritual part. It is a creative act of God relating to man's spirit, and here is the realm in which worship rises to God. In a great cathedral, the eye of God rests on, and the ear of God is open to, what is taking place in the spirits of the worshippers, and all the trappings of an earthly sanctuary are simply disobedience to Him. They do not and cannot, assist. They can only hinder, by encouraging something other than the true worship in spirit and in truth.

"My spirit prayeth," says Paul in 1 Corinthians 14: 14. In the church he prays and sings and blesses with his spirit, with his understanding, and with his heart. Indeed, it would be appropriate at this point to recall how all that has gone before has prepared us for this emphasis on the location of worship in the spirits of men and women. We saw that worship is "an attitude of spirit, taken by man realising the presence of God revealed." The sacrifices of the true worship are spiritual sacrifices, and one chapter was devoted to enquiring what these sacrifices are.

Let us consider again the gathering for the Lord's Supper described in the Prologue. In such a gathering, they are either active in heart and spirit, engaged with the Father and the Son, the love of God and the blood of Christ, or there is nothing.

Every external and material thing has been deliberately reduced to a cypher. The loaf and the cup proclaim themselves not to be looked at, but to be the appointed means whereby what they represent forms the meditation of the spirits of those assembled. To contemplate this presents a challenge to all who attempt what these men and women attempted. The beam of attention, as it is with the eye and heart of God, is entirely concentrated on what is taking place in the spirits of the worshippers. Every moment in which we have to say "No infant's changing pleasure is like my wandering mind," represents a victory for the tempter.

F. W. Grant has left us a striking comment on Abraham and Lot. "When we would be with Him, in our seasons of habitual or special devotion, how often do we . . . realise the intrusion of other thoughts — unwelcome as, to Lot, were the men of Sodom. We are apt . . . to seek to silence conscience with the thought that they are unwelcome, as if this relieved us from responsibility about them. . . . But why had Abraham no such intruders? The thoughts that throng upon us when we would gladly be free — at the Lord's Table . . . — have we no responsibility for these? The effort to obtain what when obtained we can so little retain, while others things flock in with so little effort, does it not reveal the fact of where we are permitting our hearts to settle down?" There is indeed a limitless wealth of substance, in connection with the Father and the Son, to occupy the spirits of the redeemed both now and for ever in adoring contemplations of the glory and beauty of Christ, and His title to everlasting glory and blessing through the blood of His sacrifice. To us, as to the first disciples the

Lord asks, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

In the second place the essentially spiritual nature of the true worship is connected with the fact that the Spirit of God is its sole energising power. "We worship by the Spirit of God."

In John 7: 37 and 38 there is a reference to thirsting and drinking and living water: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The explanation follows: "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This explanation doubtless applies also to the similar references in John 4: 13 and 14: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Thus we have here two directions of the Spirit's flow in the believer, "springing up" and "flowing out." For the moment, great as is the importance of an outflow to the thirsty world around, we must concentrate on the "springing up," for the Saviour leads directly on to explain that this springing up is in the true worship. Worship is the springing up of the Holy Spirit in believers. The same Person and power which satisfies the thirsty spirit, empowers the satisfied spirit to rise up in worship to the Father.

On this note we bring to an end our study of the words of Jesus to the woman at Sychar's well. Christian worship is the outflow to the Father of hearts and spirits that have

found their delight by the Spirit in the Father and in the Son. "By (Christ), says the apostle, we have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2: 18). No power other than the Holy Spirit is adequate for such worship; but the Holy Spirit has been given, for Jesus has been glorified in heaven. Great as is the privilege and opportunity to engage in the true worship, the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit in believers and in the Church is equal to it, and will continue so to the end. Though distractions and diversions are so numerous and so plausible, this is a context in which it remains true

that "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12: 4-6). He it is who has put a new song into our mouths, even praise unto our God; and He it is by whose power and by whose touch the strains of this song will never end.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen."

PAUL'S LAST WORDS

T. S. DAVISON

PAUL'S second letter to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, constitutes his last words, for in it he tells of his approaching "offering up", i.e. his martyrdom. The letter speaks of the increasing corruption and departure from the truth in the Christian profession, even at that early stage of the history of the church, and looks on prophetically to the full development of evil in that profession in "the last days". But side by side with the ruin of what was committed by God (mainly through the inspired writings of Paul) to the church in responsibility, there is also indicated in the letter that which is "in Christ Jesus", and consequently immune from failure or corruption. These last words of Paul, therefore, were not only invaluable instruction to Timothy, a "man of God", in the situation in which he found himself

in his day, but also to the whole church of God throughout the present dispensation, and particularly in this period in which we live, when surely the conditions of "the last days" are all around us.

PART I

Phygellus and Hermogenes (1; 15).

In the days of his ministry as a free apostle, Paul had laboured for three years in Asia, with Ephesus as his centre of operations. From that centre "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19: 10). Many souls were saved, and assemblies were planted, and functioned as lightbearers in the surrounding darkness of paganism, according to the mind of God as revealed through the apostle.

Now he was a prisoner of Jesus

Christ, an ambassador bound with a chain in a Roman prison, and shortly to lay down his life as a martyr. It is in these circumstances that he sadly writes to Timothy, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." The latter names were doubtless well known to Timothy as those of prominent brethren, and erstwhile followers of Paul. It is not necessary to assume, that as yet, they had rejected the apostle's teachings, but they, along with all those whom they influenced, shrank from the reproach of Christ associated with one who for Christ's sake was in the power of the infamous Roman Emperor Nero. At a later date the Lord Jesus revealed to the assembly at Ephesus through His servant John the hidden root cause of all subsequent declension — "Thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2: 4). This perhaps received one of its outward expressions in their turning their backs, figuratively speaking, on Paul, through whom the Spirit of God had communicated to them such heights of revealed truth.

In contrast to the names mentioned Paul went on to speak with great gratitude and appreciation of Onesiphorus, who, he said, "was not ashamed of my chain" and had gone to considerable trouble to search him out in prison, in order to minister comfort to him (1: 16-18).

The defection of Demas (4: 10)

With the mass defection of the Asian Christians might also be linked the personal defection of Demas (4: 10). He had departed unto Thessalonica, perhaps ostensibly in the Lord's service. This brother had been associated with Paul at Rome for some time, and his name appears in other epistles among those sending

greetings. But it had to be written of him that "he loved this present world," and in this he is typical of the worldly-minded Christian who tries to "make the best of both worlds," and who seeks to avoid the odium associated with the reproach of Christ and the offence of the cross, while maintaining a show of activity in service.

Hymenaeus and Philetus (2: 16-18)

Turning away from Paul is followed by the corruption of the truth he taught, and the active propagation of error. "Profane and vain babblings" (verse 16), perhaps similar to the pagan philosophies and Judaistic ritualism with which the Colossian assembly was threatened, were being mingled with the apostolic teaching, together with the denial, or at least the perversion, of fundamental truth. In this connection, two further prominent names are mentioned, Hymenaeus and Philetus, whose Satan-inspired teachings were overthrowing the faith of some. These evil workers were doubtless examples of the "vessels to dishonour" in the great house referred to in verse 20, from whom all who would be "vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" are exhorted to purge themselves.

Jannes and Jambres (3: 18)

An appalling prophetic description of the moral depravity of professing Christendom in the last days is given in verses 1-5. Eighteen distinct forms of evil are detailed, the whole being cloaked under a form of religion — "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." The manner in which this mass of religious evil is in opposition to the truth of Christianity is illustrated by the

way in which Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, namely, by attempting to simulate by Satanic power the effects produced by the power of God. Religion without Christ certainly lacks the true power of godliness, but Satan is very willing to supply power of a different nature. But just as the folly and futility of Pharaoh's magicians were exposed, so, says the apostle, shall the folly of these be made manifest to all. In the meantime, however, the process of degeneration and declension proceeds. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (verse 13).

The climax of evil (4: 3, 4)

The process which began by the turning away from Paul in chapter 1 reaches a terrible climax in these prophetic verses, which surely have their fulfilment in the present time. No sober student of Scripture surveying the field of Christian profession today can fail to recognise the features here plainly foretold. Sound doctrine of any kind cannot be tolerated; they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, not, alas, for the truth, but for the fables to which they so readily turn. How many and varied are the fables which have found ready acceptance among so many who have not yet divested themselves of the label "Christian"! The superstitious fables of Romanism (the English Reformers referred to the sacrifice of the mass as a "blasphemous fable"); the fables of "science falsely so called" which finds no place for God in His own universe; the fables of the many kinds of liberal theology which have robbed the Holy Scriptures of Divine authority in the eyes of the masses — anything, in fact, is preferred to "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

PART 2

Life in Christ Jesus (1: 1)

It is a relief to turn now to the seven references throughout the epistle to that which is "in Christ Jesus," and consequently beyond the reach of human failure in responsibility, for it is established in a risen and glorified man at God's right hand, who has settled eternally the sin question by the sacrifice of Himself; has annulled death and him who had the power of death; and has brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel.

First of all, then, Paul's apostleship was according to "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." In his writings generally, he characteristically speaks of life, or eternal life as being in prospect as a hope, or promise, as in this instance. That is, he contemplates it in its eternal sphere of enjoyment. John, on the other hand, characteristically looks at eternal life as in the present possession and enjoyment of the believer. Both aspects are, of course, true and in fact complementary. But Paul also speaks of "life in Christ Jesus" as a present reality. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 2). This is the life of the risen Christ, communicated to every believer, and made effectual by the indwelling Spirit, and enables those who walk after the Spirit to fulfil the righteous requirements of the law.

God's Purpose and Grace in Christ Jesus (1: 9)

How reassuring to know that our salvation and holy calling are "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus

before the world began." It is perhaps not too difficult to apprehend that in eternity God had a purpose, towards the implementing of which His ways in time on earth would be directed. But it is surely affecting to learn that *Grace* was in His heart before the world began. *Grace* presupposes the presence of sin, and before ever the material creation was brought into being, God in His omniscience foresaw the invasion of sin, and His grace was given us in Christ Jesus, as the solution to every problem raised thereby. When Adam sinned God was not taken unawares. He did not have to improvise to meet an unforeseen circumstance. The grace that was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began was made manifest in time, by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has annulled death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel.

The form of Sound Words (1: 13)

Timothy was enjoined by Paul to "have (or, hold fast) an outline of sound words, which words thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (N.T.). Timothy had long been closely associated with Paul in service, and doubtless many of the "sound words" had been communicated verbally. But, in addition, there were those written words, indited by the Holy Ghost, which constituted Paul's first letter, which, together with the words of the second and final letter, Timothy was to hold fast. So far as believers today are concerned, the "outline of sound words" not only refers to Paul's inspired writings to Timothy, but to the whole written revelation of God constituting the Holy Scriptures, whether in the Old or New Testaments.

An important qualification resides,

however, in the phrase "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Mere mental knowledge of the Word of God, apart from living faith in Christ, and that love of Christ of which Paul elsewhere spoke as being the constraining power of his life, could bring its possessor into the position of the scribes and lawyers in the days of Christ's flesh. To them the Lord spoke the solemn words, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me that ye might have life" (John 5: 39, 40).

The Grace which is in Christ Jesus (2: 1)

It would seem from various indications in Paul's letters to Timothy that the latter was of a sensitive, retiring and somewhat timid disposition, and rather susceptible to discouragement; hence the exhortation to stir up (or rekindle, N.T.) the gift of God which was in him by the laying on of the apostle's hands (1: 6); and the encouraging word that "God has not given us the spirit of fear (or cowardice, N.T.) but of love, of power, and a sound mind" (1: 7). So now, in the face of widespread failure and departure from the truth, he is directed to the unfailing resource of every believer, "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was eternally rich, in matchless grace became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be enriched. But He Who in grace stooped so low, now sits on the throne of grace, and elsewhere in the New Testament the believer is exhorted to come boldly to that throne, to obtain mercy and to find grace for seasonable help. Paul himself had had a wonderful

experience of that "grace which is in Christ Jesus." In one of the most trying circumstances in his chequered life of service, in response to his earnest and repeated prayer for relief, he had heard his Lord say to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12: 9).

Salvation in Christ Jesus with Eternal Glory (2: 10)

Paul said that he "endured all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." Here, salvation is contemplated in its most comprehensive sense, past, present and future. Every believer knows by faith the salvation of his soul as a present and unassailable reality, because it depends on what Christ has done in redemption's work. But there is also salvation in a continuous sense — daily, hourly, and momentarily — as brought to our notice in the Hebrew epistle, where the unceasing service of the Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest is the subject before the Holy Spirit. There it is stated that "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7: 25). This character of salvation, in relation to the temptations and infirmities of believers, and also to their approach to God in the holiest of all, is resident in Christ Jesus, and is available to all saints, throughout the whole of the wilderness pathway.

"The salvation which is in Christ Jesus" refers also, however, to the future. Writing to the Philippian saints Paul says, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile

body (or, our body of humiliation, N.T.) that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3: 20, 21). Then, and not till then, will the salvation of the believer, spirit, soul and body be complete.

But even this is not all. Our salvation is to be "with eternal glory." In His wonderful prayer to His Father in John 17, the Lord said "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them," and also spoke of His own eternal personal glory, as the Son, which His own are to behold. What a destiny for those who were once dead in trespasses and sins!

Living Godly in Christ Jesus (3: 12)

Paul had passed in review his own almost incredible pathway of service, suffering and persecution, and warned Timothy (and us) that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." This reminds us of some of the last words spoken to His own disciples by our Lord Jesus before His death. Speaking of the period lying ahead after His death, resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, He warned them not to expect any better treatment from the world than had been accorded to Himself. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15: 20).

This must always be the portion of all those who will live godly in Christ Jesus, although the *character* of the persecution may, and does, vary from time to time, and from place to place. In the early days of Christianity, and in the personal experience of the apostle Paul, persecution usually took a violent form, being expressed by beatings, torture, bonds and imprisonment, and ultimately death by martyrdom. In our day and generation, in this and

in other highly favoured lands where religious liberty is enjoyed, the world's persecution does not take such forms, but can still be cruelly expressed in opposition, contempt or ostracism.

But let us not forget that even at this moment, saints living under totalitarian or communistic forms of government are liable to persecution involving torture, not only physical, but mental, and death itself. We might well not only thank our God for the liberties we enjoy in our land, but also at the throne of Grace "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity as being ourselves also in the body" (Heb. 13: 3).

The Holy Scriptures (3: 15)

Timothy had the inestimable advantage of having been brought up in a godly home, where the Holy Scriptures were revered; and from childhood his mind and memory had been stored with these holy

writings (in his case the Old Testament). These, said the apostle, are able to make thee "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The knowledge and memory of Holy Scripture is like a well laid fire. The latter, in itself, possesses neither heat nor light — it needs the application of a lighted match. Similarly, knowledge of the Word of God, stored in the memory, is able to make its possessor "wise unto salvation," but salvation itself is dependent upon "faith which is in Christ Jesus," the living Word of Whom the written word speaks. This passage of Scripture is surely a great encouragement to all who labour among the young, whether parents or Sunday School workers. Much is attempted, in these days, to capture the attention and interest of the young, but in the end there is no real substitute for the teaching of the Word of God itself, for it is this alone that is applied by the Holy Spirit to heart and conscience to bring about new birth.

THE GUIDANCE OF THE LORD

W. ANGLIN

WHEN I was a boy of nine years of age, our family, instead of spending our summer holidays in the usual way, at the seaside, accepted an invitation given us by an elderly nurse to spend our holiday in her cottage in a distant country village, which she portrayed as an earthly paradise. After a long weary journey by rail and road we arrived in a colliery village which possessed no charms whatever. Instead of the blue sea we loved, there

was a dirty duck-pond. Our hostess we thought sour-faced, and seemed to possess a dislike to children, an attitude which we children reciprocated.

Near the village lived two elderly Christian ladies. They, hearing of the presence of my mother so near at hand and knowing her to be a writer of Gospel tracts, invited her to visit them. I accompanied my mother to their house which was surrounded by a beautiful garden.

Childlike, I was impressed with the kindly faces of these good ladies, and in my mind contrasted them with our sour-faced hostess. Though more than 70 years have passed since that visit, I still record the following conversation.

THE LADIES. "What is the name of the town where you live, Mrs. A.?"

MRS. A. "We live in Stockton."

THE LADIES. "Oh, Stockton! Do you happen to know of an old friend of ours named Miss G.?" My mother replied that she had known a person of that name, but she had died during the previous year. The ladies then enquired if she knew anything of Miss G.'s circumstances. My mother informed them that she had visited Miss G. daily during her last illness and attended to her needs, but shortly before she passed away, she had confided to her that she had been greatly troubled, for she had exhausted all her resources and had nothing left to pay the doctor nor her funeral expenses. She had cried to the Lord to help her, and almost immediately she received by post some five pounds

from an old friend from whom she had heard nothing for some years. On hearing this the tears came into the eyes of the two ladies. When they had overcome their emotion, they told my mother the story of which hers was the sequel. One morning of the previous year, one of the ladies had been greatly impressed with the idea that she should send some money to Miss G. The two friends discussed the matter and the difficulties. "Perhaps Miss G. did not need any help; perhaps she had moved or died." So they prayed about it seeking guidance, and the impression received was "send help at once!" So off went the five pounds. They had heard no further news until my mother's visit. They exclaimed, "Oh, thank the Lord we attended to His voice!"

Though but nine years of age, I was impressed by the complexity of the circumstances which resulted in the ladies hearing of the sequel of their kindness to their old friend; the long weary journey we had undertaken to such an out-of-the-way village, and our otherwise unpleasant holiday. Being "in the way," the Lord had led us.

Tomorrow. Two contrasted ways of life appear in 1 Corinthians 15: 32 and 58. "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" and "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." What stands between the two? It is the resurrection of the dead. The first follows "if the dead rise not". To eat, drink and be merry might be sound — *if* death were the end! But since Christ *is* risen from the dead; since the dead *shall* be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; since we *shall* bear the image of the Heavenly; since tomorrow we live, then let us be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

1. Introduction

TWELVE men, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, had been sent by Moses to reconnoitre the Land. Forty days later they returned, two of them staggering under the load of an enormous bunch of grapes, brought back as an earnest of the produce of Canaan. Then there ensued the most astonishing scene. This great host of people had migrated from Egypt (with overpowering evidences of God's might on their side), for the clear purpose of entering into possession of the Land of Promise; but they now refused to proceed. Four men stood for going ahead; the rest clamoured to return. For the time being the majority prevailed against the four, and they all turned their backs on the land flowing with milk and honey and set their faces to the wilderness. The few saw that country as the land of true delight which was their possession by gift of God, and were all for courage and obedience. The many were blind to the delights of Canaan under divine gift and therefore were not urged forward by its appeal; but they *did* see the difficulties and thought it not worth while. So for many years (in the cases of the individuals concerned, for ever), they missed God's best, which was life in the land of promise, and chose instead death in the desert.

"Now these things happened to them for ensamples, and they were written for our learning," and in order to learn *our* lesson, we, as Christians, have to turn to the Ephesian Epistle, for there we learn what is God's best for us, and are warned of the danger of missing it.

Every Christian knows the story of our salvation from the point of

view of our own experience. It all began with the awakening of a sense of need. There followed the confession of the need, and the acceptance of Christ by faith, and the realisation that the need was met in Him. This experience is epitomised in the words "repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Thereafter, like Israel in the desert, we have experienced God's daily care and guidance. All this is great and good, but can anyone really think that God is satisfied merely with meeting our need, or even that God's activity in blessing toward us began with the object of meeting our need? In the Father's home He has His own delights and concerns in which His own heart is satisfied and the object of this Epistle is to tell how God has acted, out from His own delight before the foundation of the world, to plan and create a world in perfect accord with His own good pleasure, then to allocate to us a place with Himself in that world. This is the bearing of the phrase "according to the good pleasure of His will" (1: 5). From the opened heaven God spoke, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom is all My good pleasure."

It sometimes happens that a girl — perhaps engaged to be married — befriends a little boy, to the great pleasure of the little boy. From time to time she presents him with a model Deltic Locomotive, or of Stirling Moss in an Aston Martin. This pleases him beyond measure, and he thinks of her as the best of all friends. But after all, when evening comes she returns into her own world of delights from which he is entirely excluded, and so it must be in the nature of things. What God has done is something quite different from this. He has not given us

good gifts and then returned to His own world. The thought is staggering when once seized. It is that when God began the story, long before our need arose, and indeed before our existence, "before the foundation of the world," He reached out from His supreme delight in His Well-Beloved to create a world to be headed up and filled with the fulness of that wonderful Person, and to predestinate His elect to a place in that world as their everlasting home.

The thought that God has His own centre of delight and action is further illustrated from the Gospels. Christ came to reveal the Father, and quite early in the gospel story He began to speak to the disciples about the Father. The contrast between the first and last words recorded concerning this revelation are highly instructive. According to Matthew 6 our Father in heaven stoops down to be concerned with His children's needs in their homes. He knows that they say "What shall we eat?" and "Wherewith shall we be clothed?" He makes the concerns of their homes His concern, so that they do not need to be anxious about them. See the contrast in John 14 to 17. Their thoughts are taken away to the Father's house in heaven. There is a home which has its own interests and joys, and His prayer is that their hearts might be there, as indeed, spirit, soul and body they will in the end be there.

When the moment came for God to put into execution what He had purposed before the world's foundation, His elect were spiritually dead and distant from God. This is the subject of the second chapter, which tells how God "who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us," has dealt with this death and distance, through the

death and resurrection of Christ. When we were dead He has given us life in that we have been quickened, raised and seated with Christ. For our distance He has given nearness to Himself in that we are "made nigh by the blood of Christ."

It is, however, in the third chapter unquestionably that we come to the heart of what the Spirit of God is bringing before us in this epistle; and few would question that it is in verses 17 to 19 of this third chapter that we reach, in the apostle's prayer, the heart of the matter: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Thus to know the love of Christ is the corn and the wine, the milk and honey, the wealth and plenty of the Christian's Canaan. It is the pure delight of a day which will know no evening shade.

Paul's ministry was to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and this prayer was for the possession by the saints of the true riches. It has been said that the world is like a shop window. We are to imagine a certain day on which the most extraordinary purchases were being attempted in a large store. It all started with what they saw in the windows. Someone had been round crossing the prices. Here was a mink coat marked at £5. Here was a camera with every conceivable refinement offered at 10/-. There is a piece of tinsel decoration priced at £250, and a toy motor car at £800. Only in so far as people have an informed knowledge of the true values of things from a worldly

point of view could they be preserved from making fools of themselves in a case like this. The world is like a shop window in which someone has reversed the prices. Things which have in themselves little or no power of lasting satisfaction are valued highly and sought diligently. No value is put upon the things which are the true wealth, the real riches. With one voice this as well as other epistles declares that the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord is the real treasure. "The exceeding riches of His grace:" "the unsearchable riches of Christ." And to the Colossians: "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ — we have this treasure in earthen vessels."

What can we do about this great matter? We can do as Paul did: we can *pray*: and the very words we need are here put into our mouths. We shall learn that just as Israel had to fight for the possession and enjoyment of Canaan, so we shall have to fight for our Canaan. The closing words of the epistle deal with the fight, and at the end of Paul's enumeration of the weapons of our warfare comes the weapon of "all-prayer," as Bunyan called it.

One of the Christian's first steps in light is to learn what God in Christ has done *for* us, and his first prayers will always include request for our daily bread and for all our ordinary needs. We soon learn also the need for prayer concerning what God can do *through* us and others. But how slow we are to learn that so much Bible prayer is about what God can do *in* us, and the prayer in Ephesians three is one of the greatest of these: "now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh *in* us." Let us purpose

now to pray often this prayer for a knowledge which passes knowledge, to know the love of Christ, to be filled with all the fulness of God, to possess God's best.

Since it is not the intention in these studies to go through the epistle chapter by chapter, a brief synopsis will provide a basis for tracing selected themes.

- 1: 3. *Title.* God's activity in blessing toward us.
- 1: 4 to 3: 2. *TEACHING.*
- 1: 4 to 14. *God's acts* according to His Purpose.
- 1: 15 to 2: 22. *The Church.* The organism in which we are united to Christ.
- 1: 15 to 23. Prayer for knowledge leading to the Church, Christ's body.
- 2: 1 to 10. The consequences of union with Christ.
- 2: 11 to 22. In the Church all saints are one with each other.
- 3: 1 to 12. *The Mystery.* Finality in the unfolding of God's plan.
- 3: 13 to 21. *The Fulness* of God prayed for.
- 4: 1 to 6: 20. *CONDUCT.*
- 4: 1 to 6. The Unity of the Spirit.
- 4: 7 to 16. The Growth of the Body.
- 4: 17 to 5: 21. The Old and the New Man.
- 5: 22 to 6: 9. Relationships.
- 6: 10 to 20. The Fight.

The third verse of the first chapter is a kind of inspired title for the epistle, indicating that the subject is God's activity in blessing toward us. This verse also specifies the realm in which our blessings are located — "heavenly places" — and the Person in whom they are bestowed — Christ. All the dominant themes of the epistle gather naturally under this head. This activity is according to *purpose*. In this

purpose, the *Church* is the organism in which we are united to Christ. The *Mystery*, or Secret, signifies the distinct advance made when Christ was ascended and the Spirit given, so that the full plan, hitherto hid in God, could be revealed.

The intention in the pages which follow is to trace some of these threads through the epistle, with the prayer that the Spirit Himself may guide us into all the truth, and that we may find ourselves, as we tread these paths, in the living experience of dwelling in Canaan.

THE TRUE WORSHIP

J. S. BLACKBURN

11. Epilogue

IT is inescapable that there should be a brief return to the note of personal experience struck in the Prologue.

The description in the Prologue of a simple assembly for worship would be recognised as true to life by anyone who knew such gatherings firsthand. It must nevertheless be conceded that the description was also in some measure idealised. It would be less than candid to attempt to conceal the fact that in a lifetime of association with such gatherings there has been a good deal of disillusionment, both at the level of externals and at that of the inner spirit. A variety of diction, intelligence and education makes heavy demands on patience, understanding and love on the part of each and all. A truly free expression is difficult to preserve, and a fixed and esoteric framework of vocabulary and speech can become as binding as any liturgy. The cacophonous dirge, at times and in places, is only too much in evidence. A hymnbook used in an open form of service can become perilously near to being a prayer book.

It is, of course, at the level of the inner spirit animating the worshippers that the real problem lies. The fact is that if services are controlled by a fixed organisation with an elite

trained to perform the externals, then this organisation completely masks fluctuations and variations in the spiritual love and devotion of the individuals composing the mass of the gathering. The services can proceed decently and in order if spiritual life is totally absent. If, on the other hand, all support of a fixed order for services is deliberately removed, and everything is made to depend on individuals being moved and empowered by the Spirit of God, then every weakening, every fluctuation, in the spirituality of the members betrays itself immediately. If what is "in spirit" and "by the Spirit" is absent or enfeebled, then it might well be said that the members of such gatherings are of all men most miserable.

Since it makes such demands on spirituality, is it worthwhile to continue the attempt to obey the Word of God in the conduct of corporate worship? Why not capitulate to expediency and venerable antiquity?

This is the question I have tried to answer from the Scriptures in the preceding pages. The answer must be in the affirmative, for two reasons, first because it is according to the truth of God's Word, and second because of the great spiritual gain from doing so. For the first, I underline the paragraphs at the end of

chapter four, and especially the sentence, "they are cutting adrift from centuries of tradition, and extending the principle of acting on the Word of God as sole authority and guide in ministry and in the Church, as well as in evangelical truth." When once I see that such conduct of worship alone fulfils the sound evangelical principle of obedience to and conformity with the Word of God, then, like Luther, I can do no other. Obeying the Word of God is not an optional extra.

For the second, I refer again to

chapter five, and repeat the sentences, "the sacrifice of praise to God derives its fragrance to Him from the sweet savour of the name of Jesus. It is thus pleasurable to the Father for His people to commune with Him, sharing His delight in His well-beloved Son." "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may share with us: and truly our sharing is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." This is indeed the celestial music: this is fulness of joy.

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

COLIN CURRY

THE importance of the subject of the second coming of Christ is evident from the frequency and widespread distribution of the references to it in scripture. Again and again in the Old Testament the end-time of our age, which His coming will introduce, is referred to; sometimes this is done directly and at times in more veiled form. The distinction between His coming first to suffer and later to enter into His glory is also in the Old Testament pages, though clearer to see and understand in the light of the New Testament teaching. That Christ once appeared in our world is a matter of history, which probably none would doubt or deny. That God was in this way revealed, and that the reason for Christ's coming was "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9: 26) may not be believed by all; but it is accepted and appreciated by many who have personal faith in Him. But that He will appear "the second time . . . unto salvation" (verse 28) awaits fulfilment, and because of this can be given less weight than it

should, even in the thoughts and lives of true Christians. A consideration of some scriptural aspects of His coming may help to counter this possibility, and to promote the attitude of true hope and expectation which should characterise Christian people.

1. *His coming is promised and sure.*

Many passages take for granted the truth of Christ's second coming and use it as a basis of exhortation to self-control and watchfulness in the Christian's life, or as a reminder of the brightness of his prospect, thus stimulating confidence and hope. It may be well, however, to refer at the start to a few passages which emphasize in a more direct way the reality and certainty of His coming. Matthew 24 begins with a question from the disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" A detailed reply from our Lord, covering many aspects of His return, follows in the two ensuing chapters. That this is to be taken very seriously is evident from the tone of His words; but,

as if to underline the importance and certainty of His coming. He includes such words as "Behold, I have told you before," and "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (verses 25, 35). Again, in John 14: 3, He speaks to His disciples in a very different context, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." After His ascension, the first message to the wondering disciples was, "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 11). The concluding chapters of the Bible have much on this theme, with a threefold repetition of the promise of His return in the last chapter of all (Rev. 22: 7, 12, 20). Thus scripture emphasizes the firmness of the promise, and treats it as a matter of almost final importance for believers to keep in mind and to act upon.

Attitudes to the thought of our Lord's return can nevertheless be very varied. One attitude, which the scripture does not fail to anticipate, is that of the scoffer, asking, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3: 4). The ground for such an attitude arises from the delay in Christ's return. No intervention in the affairs of this world has occurred over a long period; therefore it is affirmed to be improbable or even impossible. The same passage gives the true reason for the delay, which is the patience and longsuffering of God. But it also asserts firmly that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise," and "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (verses 9, 10).

There are many references to the immediacy and the decisiveness of our Lord's intervention when it comes about; "quickly," "in a moment," "as the lightning," "as

a thief in the night," are some of the expressions used. But, although this is so, there are also references to possible delay, and even the lapse of twenty centuries need not be considered to be unexpected and unforeseen in the light of some passages. The verses in 2 Peter 3, already referred to, show that delay sufficient to give unbelief ground for such an argument to be expected; the verses also speak of thousands of years as being no test to the patience of God. The passage in Matthew 24 suggests delay and the need for patient endurance. Many disturbing events will occur, but "the end is *not yet*;" these will be but "*the beginning of sorrows*" (verses 6, 8). Such a period will elapse that unsuitable behaviour on the part of nominal servants of the absent Master will be a possibility; see, for example, verse 48, where the servant is represented as saying, "my lord *delayeth* his coming" and beginning to act upon this supposition. In the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25: 5) it is clearly said that "the bridegroom *tarried*." Though they may not mock at the thought of Christ's coming, to leave it out of reckoning is a real possibility, even for Christian people. To follow our Lord's own advice, to be awake and watchful and ready, is to be truly wise. The prospect of His return is a real one, and it is to be realized at an hour which is unknown to ourselves.

2. *The effect on Christians of the prospect of Christ's return.*

There are two main senses in which the interests of Christian people are involved in the second coming of Christ. First, at His return they will enter in the final and full sense into all that His death has secured for them. It is therefore their hope, and the ground of con-

fidant and joyful expectation as the future is faced. All who have faith in Christ will enter on equal terms into these blessings, and have the same right to look on to them now.

But, secondly, Christ's coming will involve a review of the activities of Christians as His representatives during His absence; and the awareness of this aspect of His return should prompt His people to careful and purposeful living, with the dominant aim to please their Lord and to gain His approval in that day. All His followers will not be on the same footing in this sense in the day of manifestation.

First, some scriptures are quoted which speak of His coming as our hope and consolation. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14: 1, 3). With these firm and comforting words our Lord prepared His disciples for His departure. Words could hardly indicate more plainly that the hope of this is dependent only upon Himself, and is guaranteed for all who have faith in Him by His own word and nature. No questions of devotion to Him on our part, limited and imperfect as they must be, should be allowed to becloud the assurance of this, since He has promised it unconditionally, and intends it for our comfort. Other words, which can supply comfort even in times of deep sorrow, are to be found in 1 Thessalonians 4 and also in 1 Corinthians 15. In these chapters it is shown that the believer is in the future to be changed into the likeness of Christ; "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." He is also to be translated into His presence; "so shall we ever be with the Lord." This is the common hope of those that are Christ's at

His coming. Whether living still in this world, or already passed out of it, all Christian people will be involved; "we shall *all* be changed." Thus, though the Christian is not exempt from sad and testing experiences, he is represented in scripture as not downcast, but filled with joy and hope at the proximity of the return of His Lord. "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3: 20). We "serve the living and true God, and . . . wait for his Son from heaven . . . even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10).

1 John 3: 2, 3 also refers in moving words to the greatness and wonder of this prospect, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is;" but these verses also press lessons of the second kind, speaking as they do of the purity of life which should correspond with the possession of such a hope as this; "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." A high standard of life, not only outwardly but inwardly, developing progressively in its likeness to our Lord Himself, is the only suitable one for those who have the Christian hope. "It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed . . . ; put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13: 11, 14). "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord" (Luke 12: 35, 36). First, and most important of all, we must be right in the inward sense; in holiness of life, purity and grace in our attitudes, devotion to our absent Lord in all our thoughts and ways. But, also, outward activity in loyalty to Him is expected of us; a lesson which is taught, for instance, in the

parables of the talents and the pounds (Matt. 25: 19-28; Luke 19: 12-27). Our Lord has said, "Occupy till I come," and faithful service will receive its recognition in the day of His return; idleness and lethargy in the day of our opportunity will not pass unnoticed either, in that day.

3. *Coming . . . with power and great glory.*"

Finally, reference must be made to other important aspects of our Lord's second coming. Christ must return in order to consummate the story of God's ways with the world. He must return because He has a right to be acclaimed and acknowledged in the world which so far has rejected Him. He must appear in order to complete God's triumph over every adversary. "He shall . . . put down all rule, and all authority and all power . . . and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15: 24, 28). God's purpose about this is so firm and unalterable, and so certainly is Christ to be supreme, that everything is said to be under Him already. But this is yet to be made evident for all to see, and at His appearing He will assert His rights, bringing everything under His control and into submission to God. The prophets foresaw the greatness and glory of that day, and spoke too of the iniquity and chaos in this world which would be dealt with at His intervention. The following few quotations may suffice to indicate the variety of ways in which the coming and kingdom of Christ is foreseen in the prophetic scriptures. "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . it shall break in

pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2: 44). "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him" (Ezek. 21: 26, 27). "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2: 7). "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4: 2).

The New Testament expands the teaching on this theme in many ways. 2 Thessalonians 1: 7, for instance, informs us plainly that "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven," and goes on to say that this will involve the defeat and destruction of every element of disobedience and opposition to God. The chapter then speaks of Himself as the centre of universal admiration and recognition; His glory will be added to by the bringing to light, in that day, of the multitudes who have taken in advance the attitude of faith and obedient submission to Him. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, in that day." Acts 17: 31 speaks of a time, appointed by God, in which He will "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;" a similar thought is also expressed in 2 Timothy 4: 1, "The Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom." The last-quoted verse speaks more particularly of the final stages of the judgments through which the world will be brought to submission to God. The book of the Revelation begins with a view forward to that time, "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (chapter 1: 7); though much of the book

deals with the processes of judgment which will add up to this. The fifth chapter introduces this, where "a lamb as it had been slain" is seen as the One Who alone is worthy to take this great work in hand for God. The culmination appears again in chapter 19, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. . . . And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords" (verses 11, 16). Then, in the final chapters, glimpses are given of the day when Christ will rule, and

the glory of God will be known. God will be completely vindicated in all His ways with this world, and His people will rest and rejoice in the manifestation of Himself, then completed.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (II Peter 3: 14). "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2: 13, 14).

WHAT IS THE WORLD?

J. STODDART

NO true-hearted Christian would dispute that the will of God entails separation from the world. Scripture clearly teaches it and saints through all ages have practised it in varying degrees. Widely divergent views abound, however, as to what the world really is, with consequent disparity in ideas of separation from it. It is the humble intention of this little paper, therefore, to inquire how the world is defined in the Scripture and thereby to test both the character and measure of our separation from its ways.

That various aspects of the world may be considered is patent to the most elementary student of the Word, and not all references to it denote something of an evil character. "For God so loved the world," would indicate simply the whole human race, while "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," would mean the geographical location to which He came and the

purpose of His doing so. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," would proclaim the universal scope of the evangel and its commission. It can thus be seen that none of these quotations is related to the world as an evil system from which we are to separate, while elsewhere in the Word this meaning of the term cannot be mistaken. It is to this latter significance of the expression, therefore, we shall for the present devote our attention and seek the Lord's help to guide our thoughts.

A grave danger lies in the acceptance of pre-conceived and tabulated notions of what the world is, rather than allowing the impact of Scripture itself to govern our conceptions and attitudes. Too often the mere abstention from worldly entertainment and pleasures is regarded as the very quintessence of separation from the world, but surely it is all too possible to walk apart from such things and yet be very thinly insu-

lated from the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2: 12) in vain pride and complacency. In this context it may be instructive to think of the words of the Lord Jesus in His prayer to His Father in John 17. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of this world, but that Thou shouldest keep from the evil." Thus mere physical separation is no guarantee of immunity from the world's evil and, contrary-wise in the very midst of it we may be preserved from its contamination.

It is perhaps a strange and unfamiliar aspect of the world with which we are confronted in the Epistle to the Galatians — the world of *Legality*. There is a temptation to think that worldiness can be counteracted by the practice of legal principles, whereas we read, "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Gal. 4: 3). There had been an attempt to revert to the Law to accomplish "a fair shew in the flesh" (ch. 6: 12). But it was unsuccessful, and the Apostle in writing to the Galatians (some of whom at least may have been converted Jews) asks how they can return to these "weak and beggarly elements" which would only enslave them again in a world which, through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, "is crucified to me, and I to the world" (ch. 6: 14). Here is the authority to shun the world of legality and to abhor every attempt to revive the principles of a bygone dispensation with a view to making a fair show of external correctness. The persistence of the Pharisees in the Lord's day to do this — and to make their boast in it — incurred the strongest rebukes that fell from His lips. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matt. 23: 13-15). May we be careful to avoid

taking their part, lest we too should find ourselves disapproved (1 Cor. 9: 27).

A more recognisable world comes into view in the Epistle to the Colossians, but still a world of high respectability and culture, challenging any call for separation from it — the world of *Philosophy* and tradition. Doubtless with some in this early church it would seem a most desirable thing to embellish their faith with more than a smattering of the current philosophies which purported to unravel the mysteries of the unseen and even angelic regions (ch. 2: 18). But down to earth come these boastful visionaries, for to the world they belong, as the inspired writer says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (ch. 2: 8). The aceticism of the Stoics and the Spartans might even seem to reinforce the Christian argument for a life of separation, but alas its trade was in the unregenerate souls of men and thus originated in and bound them to the world. If this were accepted, then what need to "hold the Head" (ch. 2: 19)? and thus the very fabric of faith is undermined with results which are not unfamiliar to us in our day and age. Here is a world recognisable by us all and yet so specious in its claim for our allegiance that we may fail to identify it with the world that crucified Christ. Thus we would like Saul of old (1 Sam. 15: 15) "spare the best" for the Lord, only to invite the same reproof as he received, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

For the encouragement of Christian students in University it may be said that a knowledge of systematic philosophy and the application of

pure thought may well form part of your curriculum. The necessity here is not to disregard such subjects but to assess their value as representing the maximum effort of the mind to reach rational explanations of things. Hence the variety of many differing and even opposing systems of philosophy. They originate in and are therefore limited by the human mind for what that is worth. It is vastly important to recognise that they form no part whatever of Divine revelation, upon which alone the structure of Christian conceptions is dependent. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3: 11). The quiet recognition of this (alongside yet forever apart from the best thoughts of men) is to truly separate from this world the world of *Philosophy*.

Finally, let us think of the world as presented to us in the first Epistle of John. No longer is this the world of legalism with its specialised devotees, nor yet the world of philosophy with its appeal to the intellectual man, but the world of *Sensuality*, with its universal charm for the fallen nature of man. "All that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Here is the primeval character of the world which enchanted and captured the strongest desires of man and woman in the Garden of Eden. Here was a sphere in which all the senses of the human make-up could be indulged without inhibition, the flesh (the tree was good for food), the eyes (it was pleasant to behold) and pride (it was a tree to be desired to make one wise); and so the sensual man fell for it all as sponsored by the ingenious craft of that old serpent, the Devil, whose only condition to the bargain was that

God should be out of it, disbelieved and disobeyed. An easy enough condition for an already fallen and seduced mortal to comply with.

From thence has this character of the world remained unchanged, adapting itself to the changing whims and fables of each succeeding generation until our own, and implemented by the almost infinite range of incredible inventions devised by men and devils. It pursues its furious way with ever-increasing momentum, planning and carrying out its plans and projects with the one undermining aim to feed the ravenous hunger of man's sinful senses and satisfy him without God. Its appeal therefore is especially strong to the young and vigorous, and the beloved John was uses very great tenderness in writing to the young men. "Ye are strong and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the Wicked One. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (ch. 2: 14, 15).

We may have expected a more strongly worded condemnation of such a world as John describes, but the most powerful doctrinal arguments are not enough when the heart is intrigued. The appeal must be to the very springs of the new nature, as indeed it is here. The love of the world is in the most direct conflict with the love of the Father, and they simply cannot co-exist, because nothing in that world originates with the Father. "It is not of the Father" (ch. 2: 16). "O righteous Father," said Jesus in His prayer, "the world hath not known Thee." The young men would not find the Father's love in that far country, and while a thousand and one other attractions might appeal to the senses, they were "passing," transient, fleeting and when stripped

of their false glamour revealed only hatred and bitterness. Such an exposure of the world's true character provides the most effective deterrent against succumbing to its charms and turns the heart to another world, where everything originates with the Father and centres in the Son. Let us not regard this as theological rhetoric but rather increasingly prove the deep, lasting satisfaction that belongs to this sphere of divine love and life.

Young Christians in this day need the strongest possible encouragement to resist the advances of the world of sensuality. Its alluring wares are spread before the eye and its beguiling voice is heard in the home urging you to be "with it." But all the while the awful cost is concealed, the cost of lost enjoyment of the Father's love and of the companionship of the Lord Jesus. The emphasis of the world's appeal to the senses has been stepped-up enormously in the last generation and resistance to it is untenable to anything but faith. Hence the aged Apostle John, wise with the accumulation of his years and experi-

ence writes triumphantly, "And this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5: 4). Again, referring to the indwelling Spirit of God in every believer, he says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (ch. 4: 4). These two great realities of the Christian life, Faith and the Holy Spirit are more than adequate protection against the world of sensuality. But they are so because they powerfully engage our hearts with the glorious world of which Christ is the attractive centre, filling them with a satisfaction that repels the world's intrusion, and makes "the things of earth grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

May the Holy Spirit Himself help us to discern what the world really is in every guise, the world of *Legality*, the world of *Philosophy* and the world of *Sensuality*, and thus instructed may He lead our hearts to know and enjoy more fully that new world to which through grace we belong, where "Christ is everything, and in all" (Col. 3: 11, J.N.D.).

THE LORD'S GUIDANCE

W. ANGLIN

IN an isolated spot in the north of Northumberland the hero of this incident lived in a lone cottage. He was known as the "Christian carrier" and gained a precarious living by carting goods for customers from place to place. One Saturday evening he returned home empty-handed without either money or food because some customers had forgotten to pay for his service. His wife and children were hungry, having had but little to eat

that day, and when he came home empty-handed they began to cry. The father, unable to bear the sight of the sorrow of his family, retired to a near-by wood, where he knelt down to cast his care on the Lord. He soon forgot his trouble and began to praise the Lord. He returned home in the light of a full moon and on reaching the house he found the door wide open with the moon shining in. His wife had her head on the table with the children

around her skirts, having all cried themselves to sleep. He could hardly believe his eyes and rubbed them to make sure he was not dreaming. The moon shone on the family and between them and the open door was a stool and on it two large loaves of bread and a huge piece of cooked meat. He awakened the family and enquired where the provisions had come from. They were as much astonished as he had been, but none could give an explanation for they had neither seen or heard a visitor. They, however, knew well what to do with the provisions and had a feast, leaving ample for next day, which was Sunday. The carrier during the following week made enquiries, but could obtain no information whatever with regard to the bread and meat.

Some ten years later a neighbouring farmer died, known, because of his miserly ways, as "Pinch-me-Near." He employed two servants, a woman as housekeeper and cook, and a man to help with farm work. The farmer had no family, having never married.

During a gathering of friends after the funeral, his miserly ways were commented on, and a neighbour remarked that he had never been known to do one charitable deed. The female servant, his cook, replied that she could remember one kind deed and narrated the following incident.

Some ten years before his decease, her master conceived the idea that he would get on better in his business if he could establish better relationships with his neighbours. With this in view he decided to have a feast in his house and invite his friends. He went to Wooler fair and bought a supply of provisions, intending to invite the guests towards the end of the fair, for the

news during the fair would cause so much merriment at his expense. It so happened, however, that when he sought out his chosen guests, he discovered that they had all hurried away earlier as a rain-storm was threatening. Mr. "Pinch-me-Near" returned to his house with his now unwanted purchases, and with a temper like a "bear with a sore head" for having wasted so much of his substance in his proposed "riotous living." In this ill-humour, he went to bed early, but an hour or so later he got up and called his two servants and told them that he could not get to sleep "for some daftness he had got into his head." The "daftness" was that a portion of the bread and meat that he had bought had to be sent to the carrier at the lone cottage on the hill, a few miles away, near the wood. So he ordered his man-servant to get ready the pony and trap and take a large portion of the provisions he had bought, to the carrier's house. The servant obeyed his behest and the farmer waited up until the return of his man. On arriving back, he told how he had found the family asleep and the door open, and thinking it would please his master more to do all secretly, he had quietly left the food on a stool without disturbing anyone. The farmer was well satisfied that the commission had been so secretly executed. The female servant went on to say that the day after the incident her master had called both her and the handy-man and warned them, that if they ever divulged the incident of the provisions sent to the carrier, they would be dismissed from his service. The cook added that though the secret had been carefully kept until then, she felt that the master's death relieved her of the responsibility, and she felt free to tell the story.

THE CHRISTIAN'S USE OF MONEY

C. D. BLAKEBOROUGH

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT CHELTENHAM, 1963

Mark 12 : 41-44

IN an ordered society like Britain, if we work from Monday to Friday, we normally draw our wages and are paid for what we have done, and in one way or another, whether it is a piggy-bank or a pension, we are interested in money.

Recently, over the past two years, I have had to reconsider what the Bible has to say about money. Also, because I am young and have got so little experience, I cannot give practical illustrations, and all I can hope to do is to point you to what the Bible has to say about our use of money.

The Bible has indeed a lot to say about our use of money. I could hardly find a book in which it is not mentioned. There it is, among the few verses at the end of every New Testament epistle, very practical guidance about what we should do with our money. Perhaps if there is one thing which shows how much we have yielded our members to righteousness, then our attitude to money is that thing.

The first thing I learned was *why* I should give money to God. And the first reason why I should give God money is contained in 1 Chronicles 29 : 14, when David was organising the temple. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

We have been talking about our jobs, professions, and callings, but whatever job we have we only hold by the gift which God has given us. Whatever job we have, we are only

able to go there on five days a week because we have health which God has given us. We are only living in this land where we have full employment because God has so ruled it. All that we have is God's. All that we own is God's and we are God's stewards. All that we have is lent to us by God, and at the end we have to give an account of how we have used what God has given us.

The second thing is that He commands us to give. If we look at 1 Corinthians 16 : 2, we read that the apostle Paul asked the Corinthians to set aside their money on the first day of the week, so that when he got there he could collect the money, in that case to take it to the saints in Jerusalem. We are commanded to give of our money to God.

The third thing is — and perhaps this is the most telling one — He gave His Son.

*I gave My life for thee;
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave My life for thee.
What hast thou given Me?*

The fourth thing is that it aids our spiritual growth. If we are so interested in money that we are all out to make our pile, then, very very surely, our love for the Lord Jesus will diminish. "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6 : 10). "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6 : 21).

To whom shall we give this money? First and foremost, every gift is given to the Lord Himself. If we give it to the church, or to the

people in need, without at the back of our minds knowing that we are giving it to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is mere charity. But if we give it as unto the Lord, it is akin to worship. The apostle Paul says to the Philippians that he had no need for their money, for he had already received some, which was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Phil. 4: 17, 18). We should give it as unto the Lord.

Also we should give it to the poor. There are innumerable scriptures about this, beginning with the gospels. "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (Luke 14: 13).

Thirdly, we should give it to the ministers of the Word. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5: 18). This means giving to those who are in full-time service, including those who are serving on the mission field.

Fourthly, one of the subjects which comes in most frequently, we should give it in hospitality. In Hebrews 13: 2 we read, "Thereby some have entertained angels unawares. In Titus 1: 8 we read that a bishop is to be "a lover of hospitality." Time and again, in the New Testament we are exhorted to go in for hospitality. I personally find that it is over a cup of tea that you get to learn most about other people's own lives, as to how they are getting on in the Christian faith.

Fifthly, we should give to, or through the local church. The type would be giving it to the temple, in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, anonymity was attained by giving through the church. Also, righteous obligations are to be met, such as the cost of lighting, electricity, or a new building.

How should we give? The classic scripture on this seems to be 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, where we have almost two whole chapters on the subject of giving. We are told to give joyfully, sacrificially, wholeheartedly, liberally, purposefully, willingly. In the sermon on the mount, we are told to give secretly. In the story of Ananias and Sapphira we are told to give honestly and sincerely.

Finally, in Peter's first epistle we are told to "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Peter 4: 9).

Another thing the scriptures deal with is *how much* we should give. Now I am not going to say to you how much you should give. I would just like to draw your attention to the scriptures on this subject.

If we look in the Old Testament we all know very well that many kinds of giving were enjoined upon the children of Israel. *Tithing* is the word which comes up most frequently, and I am a little uncertain as to how many tithes they actually gave. Certainly they gave one tenth to the Levites. They apparently once every three years gave to the destitutes, and in another scripture we learn that they gave one tenth to the sanctuary. Now either these were in three successive years, or three tenths, but certainly it was a proportion of their income. They also had to pay temple dues which amounted to half a shekel. They also had to give sacrifices, and time and again we read of their sacrificing oxen, rams and pigeons.

In those days their wealth consisted in animals, and every time they sacrificed an ox, or a bullock, or a sheep, or a pigeon it was part of their stock given to God. They also gave firstfruits of the harvest and of every animal. Finally, they had to

give for the annual feasts. All this represents a substantial portion of income: and it was under the law. After that they started on voluntary giving and this is how the vast sums of money were raised which went into the building of the tabernacle and even more vast sums which went into the temple.

I am not going to say you should give a tithe, but I am going to say that in the law they gave a very large proportion of what they earned, and we are under grace. I think we can learn two things from all the scriptures quoted. First, it should be proportionate to what we earn, and second, it should be done regularly. As a sort of general rule, phrases occurring many times in the Bible are "according to God's blessing," and "according to our ability" (Deut. 16: 17, Ezra 2: 69, Acts 11: 29, 1 Cor. 16: 2).

Whether pension, pocket-money or salary, we should give proportionately to our income, and regularly.

The Bible also tells us *when* we should give. I have already mentioned the passage which says they "laid aside on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16: 2). In most cases, a yearly review is the only way of checking on the proportion given, otherwise it is so often found that the proportion spent on God's service comes to surprisingly little.

What about the other scriptural claims we have upon our money? We are enjoined to pay taxes (Rom. 13: 6). We are certainly told to look after our dependants. Those who don't are regarded as worse than infidels. We are told that children should look after widows, so that true widows can be looked after by the church. 2 Corinthians 12: 14 could be taken as recognising the need for saving.

What about the rest? Here we

must remember that we are stewards. Just as in the parable the master came back to ask his steward to give an account of stewardship, so we also will be asked by God to give an account of our stewardship. When we have tithed regularly, as Christians we still cannot say that what is left over is our own. I would remind you that you are a steward of *all* that God has ever given you.

Finally, what are the rewards? "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3: 10). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20: 35).

I would like to close by putting something in far better words than I can. "Nothing offers so practical a test of our love to Christ, or for others, as our attitude to money and possessions. Nor does any thing so test our claim to be delivered from this present evil world. The attitude of the unconverted man to money is too widespread to be other than well known. The world asks how much we own. Christ asks how we use it. The world thinks more of getting. Christ thinks more of giving. The world asks what we give. Christ asks how we give. The former thinks of the amount, the latter of the motive. Man asks how much we give, the Bible asks how much we keep. To the unconverted, money is a means of gratification, to the converted a means of grace. To the one it is an opportunity of comfort, to the other an opportunity of consecration."

Let us test ourselves as to what our attitude should be: is it the world's? or is it the Lord's?

2. HEAVENLY PLACES

IT was a gruesome experience for me, many years ago, to see a man fall from the top of an eighty foot building in course of erection. One can imagine three bodies of equal bulk falling through the air, a piece of rock, a dog, and a man. All three obey the laws governing material substances, including the Newtonian laws of motion. At this level man is the feeblest of the three and is likely to sustain the greatest damage. The dog and the man but not the stone, would be capable of emotional reaction. They would find this a terrifying experience, and could cry out with fear and shock. The man alone would be capable of spiritual response, could think of the consequences of such a fall, and even, in the brief seconds available, could think of meeting God. These thoughts illustrate the truths, first, that man is unique in the scale of creation, in that he has a footing in all three levels of being, body, soul and spirit, and second, that alone among earthly creatures he is capable of spiritual activity. In this particular he is like God and all other spirits. These thoughts in turn lead to the suggestion that at least an important part of the meaning of the phrase "heavenly places" must be the spiritual arena, the realm of spiritual activity, and where the spiritual conflict is waged.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." This is the first of five occurrences of the phrase "heavenly places" in this epistle, although the last is translated

"high places" (1: 3, 1: 20, 2: 6, 3: 10, 6: 12). It is possible that the same expression occurs in John 3: 12, but apart from this possibility, the phrase is characteristic of Ephesians, and therefore careful study is warranted. An understanding of the phrase is necessary to understand the epistle.

That even unregenerate man is capable of spiritual activity is clear since conscience is active in him. Yet in the realm of spiritual things unregenerate man is dead in trespasses and sins and yet walks under the influence of the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. The epistle is, however, explicit regarding what exists in heavenly places. Our blessings are there. Christ exalted is there. The saints are already seated there in Christ. Principalities and powers are there, and the rulers of the darkness of this world.

While, doubtless, bodily conditions react on spiritual things, and vice versa, the great emphasis in this letter as we shall see, is that by virtue of being spirit, man is accessible to spiritual influences, both good and evil, from God, from other saints, and from the devil and other evil spirits. Our blessings are spiritual and in the spiritual arena, or heavenly places. We are alive with life in the spirit, and above all can be open to the action of the Spirit of God, and also of the adversary the devil. Hence arises the conflict, and our actions are thought of in terms of grieving and hence hindering the work of the Spirit of God, and giving place to the devil and helping his

baleful influences. The latter truth is particularly to be seen in the fourth chapter. From 4: 17 to 5: 21 the epistle considers the conduct of the saints from the point of view of general principles, as distinct from the particular relationships and hence duties dealt with in 5: 22 to 6: 9. The lives of the saints are to be different from the lives of other Gentiles because a different spirit animates them. The two kinds of life as seen in their actions and habits are called the old man and the new man. Intensely practical matters of conduct are dealt with in 4: 25 to 5: 5, and it is here we are taught that evil conduct gives place to the devil (v. 27) and grieves the Holy Spirit of God (v. 30). Action and habit are considered here in the light of which spiritual influence to which we are accessible they encourage or discourage, help or hinder. Especially is this concept elaborated in the sixth chapter where the writer deals with the spiritual conflict in the spiritual arena.

The Old Testament shadow of heavenly places is the land of Canaan. Long before Joshua, God had chosen a people for a land, Israel for Canaan, a land of corn and wine, a land of milk and honey. When the time came for God to put into execution His promises, the chosen people were slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh. God stepped in and rescued them and across the great barriers of the Red Sea and Jordan, brought them into the land of promise. They were by promise of God not only to be in the land, but possessors of it. In fact, they found hostile nations in possession, and they only possessed it in the measure in which they conquered it. When they acted in the strength of Jehovah they were invincible, and the only thing which rendered them liable to defeat was disobedient conduct, as

at Ai. Nevertheless they never possessed it in more than a partial sense in the past. Yet Scripture is unanimous that they will, in the age to come, possess it, not in the measure of their faithfulness, but in the full measure of the promise of God, from the river to the ends of the earth.

All this is the clearest shadow cast beforehand of the Christian's Canaan, heavenly places. All begins with God, before all worlds: God, rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us: God, in the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us: God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Out of the sovereign pleasure of His will He chose a people for a place, the saints in Christ for heavenly places. He predestinated them, not only to be there, but to be in Christ supreme, to possess all spiritual blessings, to know the love of Christ. When the moment came for these purposes to be put into execution, the people were dead in trespasses and sins (yet walking according to the spirit which works in the children of disobedience). In the exceeding greatness of His power toward us, He has given us life in Christ, supreme in heavenly places. Other spiritual beings are there: they see in the saints the manifold wisdom of God, yet they are hostile and a struggle ensues. An explicit contrast is probably intended in 6: 12 — our struggle is not like Israel's, against human foes, but against spiritual powers, striving to make us fall. We have to reckon not only with our own feebleness, but also with strong enemies.

God's actions in the spiritual realm are to give spiritual blessings there, to choose, to predestinate, to accept in the Beloved, to seal with the Spirit, by whom we are united

to Christ. Christ, ascended up on high, in this realm of action gives gifts unto men, and imparts, in the power of His might, strength to stand in the conflict. The prince of the power of the air takes occasion by the failures of the saints, by his wiles to hinder their enjoyment of their blessings in Christ.

The action of the saints in the spiritual realm centres on *prayer*, as in 1: 15 to 19 and 3: 14 to 21, and *conduct* which does not grieve the Spirit of God or give place to the devil. Above all, donning the whole armour of God, it is to withstand the wiles of the devil in the evil day.

Victory in chapter six is equated with standing. Our standing is in spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and these enemies aim to bring us down. The real victory will be achieved if, when the evil day is done, and we have been subjected to the wiles of the devil, we shall be found standing. There is a good deal in Scripture about another kind of fight described in the words, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." This kind of conflict is not what the Word of God calls "the good fight", and was never part of the intention of God for us. The good fight is to lay hold of eternal life, to retain our standing in the wonderful world of spiritual blessings.

When the wiles of the devil come to us, they do not appear as pink devils labelled "wiles of Satan". They come in forms dictated by a great wisdom, designed to deceive. Our struggle is against those great and mysterious spiritual beings, of whom we know so little, called in Scripture "principalities and powers". Their method is like that of the Philistines with Samson. He only saw Delilah, and probably

never heard of or imagined the secret conference, "Entice him. Entice him, that we may bind him." Another hint as to their methods is in 6: 16: the shield of faith is needed to quench "the fiery darts of the wicked one." At times, when all seems calm and bright, a thought, a word, a sight, suddenly sets us on fire. It may be the thought of distrust of God, or something that sets alight an evil temper. From whence come such thoughts? They are the fiery darts of the wicked one. The Romans used arrows and darts carrying fire when attacking a camp, with the intention of finding and igniting inflammable material within, and so distracting and confusing the defenders. We certainly have inflammable material within, and therefore we need the shield of faith.

In face of this fight and these foes, the watchword is, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." How strange it is that any Christian is ever overcome, when we remember that the dominant fact about heavenly places is that Christ is supreme there. The exceeding greatness of the power of God has been shown in Christ's resurrection from the dead and in His exaltation; and it is explicitly in terms of His being *far above* these same principalities and powers, placed under His feet, that we learn of His present position in heavenly places. In face of this fact, how can any Christian be overcome? It can only be through neglect of the warnings and admonitions of a passage like this, and especially of this verse 10, "Be strong in the Lord." The real idea here is a passive one. "Be strengthened in the Lord." There can be no real difficulty in understanding this. Who has not had the experience of speaking to a human friend of the difficulties and problems, and coming

away strengthened by his sympathy and advice? In how much more full and abundant measure is it true that when we come constantly to the Lord, there flows into us from Him, power superior to every power that can be against us in the spiritual arena. "She only touched the hem of His garment," says the gospel story, and immediately virtue flowed out of Him. If we came to Him more constantly, realising our weakness and need, and His love and the greatness of His power, then we would be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His strength.

The next direct exhortation regarding this fight is to put on the whole armour of God. The armour of God does not grow like feathers on a bird. If this were the figure intended, the Spirit of God would have used it. It has to be put on, and this indicates a purpose (still

only in the strength of the Lord) to act in truth (not lying), righteousness, peace, faith, and to learn to use the offensive weapons of the assurance of salvation, the Word of God, and prayer.

We have considered in this paper the meaning of the expression "heavenly places" as the spiritual arena. We have learned that it is the realm of spiritual things, spiritual blessing, spiritual action, and spiritual conflict. We can be active there because we, like God and His angels, the devil and all demons, we are capable of action, and accessible to influences in that realm. Perhaps the greatest impress we should take away is the privilege and importance of prayer, especially in terms of the prayers in this epistle, so that we may see the glorious Christ, live in His love, and be strong in His strength.

THE GIFT OF LEADERSHIP

A. FORSTER

TIMOTHY must often have sat beside the dying embers of a fire and have found that with a little attention those same embers could be turned again into a bright, useful blaze. Now the aged apostle, in his last words to his son in the faith, was urging that he stir into a flame the gift of God which was in him. "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee" (2 Tim. 1: 6). Whilst noting that in Timothy's case the gift was specially endowed, we have the apostle's own words that we all have a gift (Eph. 4: 7, 8) and it is well to ask ourselves whether we too do not need one or other of the apostolic commands which were originally

given to Timothy. Had he failed to heed the injunction in the first epistle (4: 14) "*Neglect not the gift that is in thee*" and was it now, therefore, in danger of disappearing altogether?

We should notice that this lays a definite responsibility upon us — "Stir up" is something for us to do ourselves. We may see this in picture form in the Lord's parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30) where the first two servants stirred their gifts to great flame but the last man so neglected his that it was at last taken away from him. Like many living things our gifts can be developed by use, or they will

atrophy through neglect, and since it is the gift of God put there by Himself for His own ends, how important it is to consider these things seriously.

It is, to say the least, discourteous to neglect a gift, and the more we respect the giver the more we shall seek to look after the gift that it might give him pleasure as well as serve a useful purpose. So God has given us a gift which is personally ours, and He looks for us to show our appreciation by developing it and using it to the full extent. Only in this way shall His "Well done, good and faithful servant" be heard.

Perhaps we should note that a "gift" is not necessarily something we are particularly good at to start with, nor something we especially enjoy doing — it is simply something given us by God. Gift is related to task. We are to do something with it rather than to enjoy it. It must not be confused with either the gift of eternal life or of the Holy Spirit which are common to all believers; gift is distributed according to the sovereign plan and power of God, and is to be used to the glory of God by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Paul likens the distribution and activity of gift to the human body (1 Cor. 12). Perhaps we may say that whilst there is a vast difference between the operation of, say, the eye and the hand, but yet these two members are both controlled by the brain, so the various gifts, whether in one person or in many, diverse as they may be, are controlled by the Spirit of God. Just as there are very many different members of the human body, so it would be difficult, if not impossible, to enumerate the range of gifts for use in the Church of God. Nor need we confine our thoughts only to those things usually classified as "spiritual", such as

preaching or teaching — for one of the most important, if simple, truths which it is sought to emphasize here is that anything we have been given by God is a gift of God to be used to His glory.

One great gift, though perhaps not always recognized as such, is leadership. Never was it more important than today that the Church should have godly leaders, exercising a God-given gift in the right way. Let us see something of what the Word of God teaches us about this.

Moses is an outstanding example. He was obviously endowed with many separate gifts — physical strength, mental vigour, discernment, which we may have and, if so, should recognise them as gifts of God. He died with powers unabated at the age of 120 and he had carried tremendous burdens of responsibility during much of that time. He seems to have been too quick at first to use his gift of leadership and then too reluctant. Leadership usually needs training, or impetuosity will do more harm than good. It must be in God's time and way. It exposes us to special trials and temptations, not least of which is pride, and we have to be taught to meet them. It demands a life — so often in the public eye — of deep humility, transparency and godliness. But if we are called to it we must not shrink from a false sense of modesty — which is a denial of God's gift, nor from laziness, thinking that we may leave it to someone else. In Moses' later reluctance God finally had His way but His plan was marred — in so far as His creature can be said to mar God's plans — and the position destined for one was shared by two.

By contrast we may think of Gideon. He was not endowed with so many gifts as Moses; was, indeed, the least in his father's house, but

was chosen as a leader. He, too, was reluctant but, once persuaded, proved a fine leader for God. The lesson is clear: leadership does not need scholarship, age or popularity. It is given because it is a call from God. This is emphasized in the case of David; he was not man's choice of a leader, but God, looking on the heart, saw a man after *His* own heart; early training here was very important — to be a leader amongst animals has more than once been good background for leadership of men. Moses learnt patience; David, courage and skill. Perhaps we have lost something in our lives today in the drift away from Nature.

Nehemiah found himself called very unexpectedly to be a leader. We are given an autobiographical glimpse of such a person. He "wept and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (1: 4). He took upon himself the sins and burdens of his people, and risked his life in appearing with a sad countenance before the king, and then asked somewhat audaciously for such things as he needed. He had to organise the work and the workers, deal with the enemy attacks of Sanballat and his friends as well as cope with sin and unrest among his own people.

To take an example from the New Testament, we might consider Paul himself. A leader in his unconverted days (for obviously this gift is a natural one, found in those who neither know nor acknowledge God) this was turned to good account as a bondsman of Jesus Christ. Not for him to sit comfortably at home and write wonderful letters of advice and encouragement to others — he led the way in all things; into heathen countries, into foreign synagogues, in the taking of relief to the Jews, in preaching, in praying or

working night and day in other ways.

A word of warning before we go further. There are those who, like Diotrephes (3 John 9), like to have the pre-eminence. This is not the leadership of which we speak; prominence, indeed may not be leadership at all. Or, if it be, it may lead in the wrong direction. There is no denying that Satan is a great leader and he has, alas, many faithful and competent servants who come under the Lord's censure, "they be blind leaders of the blind . . . both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15: 14). Then there are those of whom Timothy was warned (2 Tim. 4: 3) who are put in a position of leadership by popular acclaim: again, we cannot but regret that there are many of this kind about today. It is our responsibility not only not to be this kind of false leader, but also not to acclaim, desire or follow them. The Pharisees of the Lord's day are a clear and dreadful example of this.

Scripture also warns against weak leadership. When Moses had been on the mount some time, receiving the law, the people came to Aaron — left as leader for the time being — and demanded a grievous thing. Aaron had no excuse that he did not know that such a thing was wrong, but he weakly gave in to the clamour of the people. Saul, a pathetic study in leadership, blamed the people when he disobeyed the voice of God through Samuel in not totally annihilating the Amalekites. Both Old and New Testaments warn against those who seek to lead in public but do not do so at home. Eli and Samuel — outstanding men of God publicly — are given as solemn examples, and Paul gives instructions concerning the elders, that they are to rule their own homes well (1 Tim. 3: 4, 5).

We may not leave the subject

without a glimpse of the One who is the Captain (literally "Chief Leader") of our salvation. To study His leadership would be a big task, but let us look at our Example for a few moments. He is the First begotten, or First born; and the word "first" here means first in "time, place, order or importance." If we go back to the beginning we are assured that He was there; in the whole system of creation, old and new, He is supreme. "All things were made by Him and for Him, and He is before all things and by Him all things consist (Col. 1: 16, 17). If that has reference primarily to the natural order of things, then we are also told that He is the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1: 18): in resurrection, also, He is the Leader — that in *all things* He might have the pre-eminence, that He might be supreme. Even when showing the high place of privilege which is ours as sons of God, Paul is careful to use the same word in Romans 8 as in Colossians quoted above — "that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren" — "Leader of a chosen race." Or, as he puts it in 1 Corinthians 15: 20 "the Firstfruits of them that slept;" it was He who burst the bars of death, the stranglehold of sin and Satan and led captivity captive in His triumph. No wonder the bride exclaims of her Beloved that He is the "Chiefest among ten thousand" the "Standard Bearer, or conspicuous One." Love draws out this acknowledgement having first opened our eyes to the truth concerning His uniqueness. In God's eyes, we are told, He is the Chief corner stone — that part of the building which gives the rest its correct alignment; so in the whole structure that God is planning, Christ is the One upon Whom it all depends. Peter refers to the Lord as the Chief Shepherd. Not only in

that which is great and majestic, which stretches sublimely from one eternity to another, but also in the minute oversight of the welfare of His own — our blessed Lord is supreme in this also. He is the Head from whom both direction and nourishment come, and it is to Him we are to look for guidance and leadership at all times.

But in this very passage (1 Peter 5) we are reminded that if there is a Chief Shepherd there are also shepherds, and that such have a responsibility to be godly leaders, to feed, have the oversight, and be good examples to the flock. It is probably well known, but worth repeating, that the word for "ensample" means a "die" — that which reproduces exact replicas of itself; it is connected with our word "type" which, at least in its modern meaning suggests that which reproduces a faithful likeness. Not that we are to slavishly follow the lives, habits, etc., of those who are our spiritual leaders, but rather, that their lives are to be such that, if thus copied, the result would be commendable.

In what ways is leadership required today? It may be amongst those concerning whom Paul says "whose faith follow." There is much scope within the church for those who will give a clear lead, by their faith and conduct, to those who may be less well grounded in spiritual things. Have we been on the Christian pathway some time? Have we, through grace, a grasp of spiritual truths? Are we seeking to obey our Lord in all the details of our lives? Then we are called to lead others. But there are more particular spheres. Sunday Schools and Bible Classes need leaders in the true sense of the word. The young people of our country need *leading*. This is an age that is not only willing to be led — they actually seek those

who will lead. The popularity of the stars of the entertainment world is well known, as is the teenage imitation of their idols' hairstyle, dress, speech, musical activity, etc. From earliest age children seek the security of being able to follow someone. Their waywardness is often due, not to being independent in their particular mode of thought and activity, but in making their own choice of whom they will follow.

But there is yet a wider sphere where leadership is required. Some are called upon to lead in their secular occupation. And there is surely both great need and opportunity in these days for this particular type of witness. It may be because we come under the heading of those Paul addresses as "Masters" (Eph.

6: 9 and Col. 4: 1). If, to any degree, we have authority over the lives of others, it is essential that our light shine brightly in this calling. It was said of one ardent worker for the abolition of slavery that working conditions in his own factories in this country were appalling. If we looked upon our position as a calling from God, and remembered that we have to give account to *our* Master in heaven, it might make a difference in the lives of many who, in places of authority, do not yet use their influence to the glory of the Lord and the blessing of their fellow men. "As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men" wrote Paul (Gal. 6: 10). The greater our opportunity the greater our responsibility. May God speak to our hearts in this matter!

DISCIPLESHIP

T. S. DAVISON

IS every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ called to the path of discipleship in this world? Or, was discipleship confined to those who followed the Lord in the days of His flesh, along with those, perhaps, who lived in the very early days of Christianity?

These, and perhaps other, questions may arise in some minds in view of the remarkable fact that although the term "disciple" or its derivatives occurs 239 times in the Gospels, and 30 times in the Acts, it does not occur even once in the rest of the New Testament.

The second question raised above can immediately be answered in the negative, for, in the Acts of the Apostles after the Gospel testimony

spread outwards among the Gentiles (chapter 13 and onwards), many believed, and are named as disciples, of whom it can be said that it is extremely improbable, to say the least, that they had seen the Lord Jesus in the flesh. The last mention in Scripture of the term is in Acts 21: 16, where "Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple," is spoken of.

By this time it is reasonable to deduce from Scripture that the full revelation of truth connected with Christianity had been communicated to the Apostle Paul by the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 12: 1-4), although not yet embodied by him in his letters to certain churches in Gentile lands. It can be affirmed, therefore, that discipleship (which, as we shall see, is

an intensely individual matter and relates to the earthly pathway) is not incompatible with the truths of the heavenly calling, the church as the body and bride of Christ, and the House of God. It is allied, moreover, very closely with that body of Christian truth connected with the Kingdom of God.

There need, therefore, be no hesitation in believing that discipleship, with all its implications, is a live issue for every believer in this late day of the Church's history on earth, and that its challenge should be honestly faced in the fear of the Lord.

THE MEANING OF DISCIPLESHIP

The primary significance of the term disciple is "one taught, or trained," or alternatively, "a learner." Our Lord Jesus Himself, on a memorable occasion said, "Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me*, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11: 29). The believer is therefore a learner, a taught or trained one, in relation to Christ as Teacher or Master. In this connection the Lord said to His disciples on another occasion, "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" (John 13: 13). Paul the apostle, in his turn, in his Philippian letter wrote "I have learned" and "I am instructed" (Phil. 4: 11, 12).

The term disciple also signifies a follower. The Lord called His disciples with the words "Follow me." Paul writing to the saints at Corinth said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11: 1). In these words he claimed to be a follower of Christ, i.e., a disciple, and exhorted the Corinthians (and us) to follow his example. Although, as has been remarked, the actual term "disciple" does not appear in

the epistles, the very essence of its meaning is conveyed in his words to the Philippian saints, "I follow after" (Phil. 3: 12).

The word also carries the idea of one under the authority and *discipline* of the Lord. The disciple is brought under the Lordship of Christ (Rom. 10: 9) and therefore, in the most practical way, into the Kingdom of God.

CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP (Luke 14: 25-33)

In these verses the Lord Jesus laid down three most stringent conditions of discipleship. In verse 25, great multitudes are seen following Him. How easy it is to join in a mass movement, and to be swept along with the crowd! But this is not discipleship. Discipleship is essentially individual, and so the Lord turned and faced these easy followers and said "If *any man* come to me," etc. This is something the believer must face in the lonely experience of his own soul with the Lord Himself, and there is no escaping the stern challenge of His stipulated conditions. If the latter are not fully met, His verdict is "he *cannot* be my disciple." Let us face these conditions without shirking the issues they plainly bring before us. Summarised, they teach us that He has the prior claim over us in relation to the most intimate earthly relationships; in relation to our own lives; and in relation to the sum total of our earthly possessions. His claims are so far reaching and radical that for any mere man to make them would be little short of blasphemy. Yet He who did make them was truly a man, the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, despised and rejected of men, but, wonder of wonders, never less than "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9: 5).

THE DISCIPLE'S NATURAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The term "hate" used by the Lord in connection with the earthly relationships of the disciple, and also to his own life, appears at first sight to conflict with the plain commands or statements of Scripture elsewhere, e.g., "Husbands love your wives," "Honour thy father and mother," "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Eph. 5: 25, 29; 6: 2). It seems, however, from certain concrete examples in the Gospels that the term "hate" in Luke 14: 26 has a relative, rather than an absolute bearing. For instance the Lord Jesus said to one, "Follow me," but he said, "Lord suffer me *first* to go and bury my father" (Luke 9: 59). Superficial judgment might say "an excellent sentiment! This man honours his father in accordance with the commandment of God," and this would, in fact, be true so far as it goes. But the vitally important word here is "first." He estimated his duty to his father to come before obedience to the Lord's command, and this is totally incompatible with true discipleship. On the other hand, in rendering ready and prompt obedience to the commands "Follow me," and, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God," he may have appeared to others to "hate" his father. This latter would indeed have been far from the truth, but he would, as a true disciple, have given the Lord His rightful place. Again, another would-be disciple said, "Lord, I will follow thee, but let me *first* go bid them farewell which are at home at my house" (Luke 9: 61). Here, again, the Lord is made to take second place to the claims of natural earthly relationships. But because of Who He is, he cannot and will

not take second place to any person, however intimate the natural tie with that person may be. The attitude of this candidate for discipleship is likened to a man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back. Such a man, said the Lord, is not fit for the Kingdom of God.

THE DISCIPLE'S EARTHLY POSSESSIONS

Similarly, the Lord Jesus indicated (Luke 14: 28-33) that true discipleship involves a careful counting of the cost, and a consequent readiness by the disciple to forsake "all that he hath." Here it is evident that the same principle obtains as in the case of earthly relationships. Christ must have the prior place in relation to whatever the disciple may possess which links him with the earth, however legitimate and necessary such links may be in themselves. When Simon Peter and Andrew answered the Lord's call, they "Straightway *left their nets*, (their means of livelihood) and followed Him (Matt. 4: 20). James and John, when similarly called, "immediately left the ship, *and their father*, and followed Him" (Matt. 4: 22). Here are concrete examples of the true disciple's attitude both to natural relationships and earthly possessions.

The question may be asked, "Is the true disciple in actual fact invariably required to deny the otherwise legitimate claims of natural relationships and earthly possessions in order to fully follow the Lord?" Other parts of Scripture, to say nothing of the history and experience of the saints of God would give the answer, "No, not in every case." Provided that there is the unqualified recognition by the disciple of the absolute nature of the Lord's claims, together with a readiness for unquestioning obedience to His revealed will, these things, which belong

exclusively to the present flesh and blood condition of the disciple in his earthly pathway, are very frequently given back by the Lord to be enjoyed, while walking in His fear. Hence we have the injunctions to husbands, wives, fathers and children in Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter, and also to "them that are rich in this world" (1 Tim. 6: 19).

THE CROSS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

But the most vital condition of all laid down by the Lord Jesus is found in verse 27 of the passage in Luke 14. This occupies the central place between the two other conditions, and it is only as this condition is satisfied that the first and third, already briefly considered, can be truly met. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." The Lord did not say "the Cross," or "my cross," but "his cross," a wholly individual matter. The expression would be meaningless, of course, apart from the Cross towards which He was steadily wending His way. For the true disciple "bearing his cross and coming after Him" involves the personal, experimental, and continuous application to every department of his life of the effect of the cross of Christ, not now as the means whereby he has been righteously forgiven and cleansed from all sin, but as expressing the judgment of God on all that he is as connected with "our old man," stated to have been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6: 6). This latter is something which God has done, and the fact is made known for the acceptance of faith; and the believer is consequently exhorted to reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6: 11). This faith reckoning is then to be implemented

in the daily life of the disciple, as aptly expressed by Paul elsewhere, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4: 10). Thus, in the practical sense, the disciple "bears his cross," and is morally fitted to answer to the remainder of the Lord's injunction, i.e., to "Come after me." Our blessed Saviour is no longer treading the pathway of sorrow, and rejection by men which led Him to the cross. "For the joy that was set before Him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12: 2). But those who through grace believe on Him, and confess Him as Lord are privileged to walk the same path of faith which He walked, and in doing so, to experience the same opposition from Satan, and the hostility and rejection of men, which were in full measure His portion in this world.

THE TEST OF CONTINUANCE (John 8: 30, 31)

Mention must also be made, however briefly, of one more condition of true discipleship spoken of by the Lord Jesus during His earthly pathway. In the verses indicated above He said to certain Jews who professed to believe on Him, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." Continuance in His word is the infallible test of the reality of any and every profession of discipleship. This is strikingly illustrated in chapter 6 of this Gospel of John, verses 66-69. It is recorded there that "from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." It may be that these, or some of them, were among the number of whom it is written that "they believed on His name,

when they saw the miracles which He did" (John 2: 23-25) but to whom the Lord, knowing their hearts, would not commit Himself. The fact that there was no real work of God in them was demonstrated later when they cavilled at His teaching, saying "This is an hard saying: who can hear it?," and forthwith ended their profession of discipleship (John 6: 60).

On the other hand, when the Lord immediately challenged the twelve apostles "Will ye also go away?," Simon Peter, who was a true disciple, notwithstanding his failures and blunders, said "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

THE DISCIPLE'S DIVINE RESOURCES

The question raised at the beginning of this paper "Is every true

believer in the Lord Jesus Christ called to the path of discipleship in this world?" should be answered by every such believer by an unqualified YES! The foregoing brief consideration of the conditions of true discipleship laid down by the Lord Jesus Himself lead, however, to the conviction that the path is an impossible one for man after the flesh. But then every believer has been furnished by the power of God with "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1: 3). The power of God, the unfailing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit, are freely and continuously available to every true disciple who renounces the arm of flesh and trusts wholly in these Divine resources. Only thus is it possible to "follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2: 21, N.T.) while learning of Him, and being subject to His Lordship.

THE POTTER'S VESSEL

J. STODDART

THERE is an undoubted fascination in watching the skilled potter at his work. As he begins, the inert and shapeless lump of clay rests on the fast moving wheel, but nothing would suggest that it could ever become a thing of both usefulness and beauty. But see this clay yield to the deft touch and gentle pressure of the potter, the vessel in his mind taking shape until at last his mind is seen in the vessel, and our eyes have seen a creative miracle.

Not only is this process fascinat-

ing, therefore, but highly instructive, as we may find by reference to Jeremiah 18, where God found an effective way of teaching the prophet a valuable lesson by sending him down to the potter's house to observe what took place there. We, too, may watch with him, for even in our contemporary world of automation little has changed in the potter's art since Jeremiah's day except, perhaps, the driving power applied to the wheel. We may still see the genius of the potter, producing his beautiful design by the same method of

handling the clay, and thus we should have no difficulty in learning the priceless lesson imparted to the prophet by such a parable.

The initial impression upon the mind of Jeremiah must have been that of near tragedy as the potter's plans appeared to have gone awry. "The vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter." Could this be a reflection upon the skill of the workman, some imperfection in the design he had conceived? Clearly not so, for both the skill and design of this potter (having in mind the application of this parable) were beyond question. More likely was it to be explained by the presence of some refractory element in the clay itself, resisting the will of the potter and rendering it useless for his purpose. "So he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." Yes, still a vessel of clay, still the same faultless design, but at last the refractory element is disposed of and the pliable clay yields to the will of the potter. He now sees his mind expressed in that vessel and is satisfied.

Neither Jeremiah nor we are left to guess the meaning of this parable. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" Not only had Israel proved to be an unsuitable vessel for God, but such is the truth as to the whole of mankind. Unyielding resistance to God's will is the very essence of sin which has marred every vessel of clay (for such is man) belonging to the first creation. The Divine Potter had created man as a vessel of clay, and what promises lay in the words of Genesis 1: 27, "So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God created He him," but what tragedy to read as early as Genesis 6: 6, "And it repented

God that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

How thankful we must be that the Potter did not end His work there and then, and to see His gracious determination to carry out His bright designs in a new creation. Jeremiah must have shared the triumph of the potter as his consummate wisdom and skill succeeded in the end in making a vessel which "seemed good to the potter". And good for him it was to learn that God could re-create Israel in the same way, and for us to learn His even greater plan in Christ and the Church, as later unfolded in the Word, yet conceived in Eternity past. As we look around us and within us today we can see the wreckage of that first vessel, traces here and there of its beauty and dignity yet utterly disfigured and marred by sin. In another metaphor this could be compared to the ruins of a once magnificent piece of architecture, bearing still recognisable traces of the architect's genius, but alas ravaged and defaced by hostile action. Such monuments of dereliction are all around us. The centuries of human history up to the Cross only served to show that Man as the first vessel could never measure up to the mind of the Divine Potter under any circumstance. The refractory element of sin having become integral with his nature opposed God's will in every possible way.

In the wisdom of God, therefore, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is seen to be at once the measure of man's unsuitability as a vessel for the glory of God, and yet the very means whereby sin will be eradicated by Him for the formation of the new vessel, His new creation. With God glorified in redemption, Christ

risen and ascended, the Holy Spirit now works as the Finger of God in the making of a vessel for His pleasure. Its pattern is Christ and every feature of His beauty and grace are to be reproduced in it for His glory. Thus alone can there be that which "seemed good to the Potter to make."

How clearly we see it to be God's undeviating purpose to make a vessel in which His wisdom and glory could be expressed. So we read that He "chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1: 4). Such indeed is the *DESIGN* of the vessel eternally in His mind. Then in the history of time the clay is selected — not for its excellence or intrinsic worth; the record of Ephesians 2: 1-3 shows just how unsuitable the material was in fact, "dead in trespasses and sins." But the Divine Potter was now at work, creating anew so that His mind could be displayed in the vessel, and thus in verse 10 the *DERIVATION* of the vessel is explicit in the words, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. . . ." Nothing is derived from the clay in the beauty of the vessel, but everything from the superb skill to the Potter, so that "now unto principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (3: 10).

But what of the *DESTINY* of this new and wonderful vessel, the Church? Surely the same epistle (5: 27) would clearly indicate this in saying, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." How it thrills the heart to know that never more shall the Divine Potter be grieved at His heart with disappointment over

a spoiled vessel, but He shall see the complete result of His patient love and unerring wisdom in a vessel for His Own delight. We need only take a look at the Apocalyptic description of this wondrous vessel in Revelation 21 to be convinced of its Divine design, derivation and destiny. Here, of course, the metaphor applied is that of a city, "coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." It is also seen to be the vessel of the glory of God (v. 11) shining with crystal clear light from every facet of its jasper-like beauty and garnished with the multi-coloured radiance of every precious gem, each doubtless expressing some perfectly defined ray of the glory of Christ and of God. What a triumph for the Divine Potter now to behold His Own image and likeness in His completed masterpiece, with every trace of sin removed, "all evil done away, and we shall dwell with God's Beloved, through God's eternal day".

It may be difficult to turn away for a moment from a scene so enchanting as Revelation 21 and indeed it should always be in our thoughts as the ultimate of all God's present ways with us now. But if one Vessel of Glory is the end product of His workmanship, we may see that in present conditions of responsibility the individual believer may be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use" (2 Tim. 2: 21). This is surely something to be coveted by us all, and not to be applied exclusively to those engaged in more prominent forms of service. Obviously the Gospel preacher and the minister of the Word must be so qualified, but equally so must the Sunday School teacher, the visitor to the sick, and the humble tract distributor; that is, if our object is to be used by the

Master and to glorify Him in our service. Only by yielding to His gracious touch and bending to His will as the Potter, can we thus become "vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work". Perhaps we need to note that the end word is "work" not words.

How this was interpreted in the life of the apostle Paul and those with him is graphically described in 2 Corinthians 4: 6, 7. "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. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." When Ananias was sent to Saul of Tarsus after Saul's conversion, the Lord said to him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts 9: 15, 16). Truly it was the shining in of the light "above the brightness of the sun" that made him the chosen vessel, but the light was to shine out to others and anything and everything that would hinder this had to be removed. Hence the purpose of the suffering through which he was permitted to pass, each fresh pressure applied to the "fragile vase of clay" (Weymouth) resulting in more refinement and transparency, with consequent fuller radiation of the light. We may be very well taught Christians, with a fine critical faculty for the niceties of truth, but are we radiant Christians, so yielded to the touch of the Master that opaque patches in our character have been dealt with by Him and made transparent so that

the light may shine through us convincingly to others, so powerfully controlled by that light and consistent with it that even a king is compelled to say, "Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian?" Yes, it is still an earthen vessel (something that no angel can be!) but containing a treasure of heavenly origin, making it evident to all that the excellency of the power does not originate with the vessel but with God. "Why look ye upon us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" says Peter at the healing of the lame man in Acts 3. But it would be untrue to say that the vessel is unimportant, for reverting to our study of Jeremiah 18, the first vessel made by the potter was rejected. It was not "meet for the Master's use." But the whole suitability of the vessel is surely to be yielded to His will, yet it is precisely this that necessitates every bit of discipline and chastening in our lives. How often the very buffetings of Satan are the instruments of the Divine Potter to shape and beautify His choicest vessel, and make him willing for His will. The catalogue of sufferings endured by the apostle given in 2 Corinthians 4 and 2 Corinthians 11 disclose to us the secret of his greatness as a choice vessel for the Lord. The conquering Gideon (Judges 7) put into the hands of his attacking forces a trumpet, "with empty pitchers (clay vessels) and torches within the pitchers" to meet the enemy. Then when the trumpets blew and the pitchers were broken to reveal the light the victory was won. Are we suffering defeat because the Gospel trumpet does not sound with a clear note from us and our pitchers are not sufficiently broken to allow the light to shine that scatters the darkness?

It would lengthen this paper undesirably to refer in any detail to the interesting and instructive passage in Romans 9 which treats of the sovereignty of the Potter in His power over the clay. But the reader is heartily commended to a study of this Scripture, especially noting in verse 23 the vessels of mercy are those "which HE had afore prepared unto glory," whereas the vessels of wrath in verse 22 are those "fitted to destruction," not by Him but by self-will and rebellion. Pharaoh is cited in verse 17 as an outstanding example of such refractory opposition to God's will, and thus he qualified himself as a vessel of wrath in which God would

demonstrate His power in judgment. But His delight is to prepare vessels of mercy unto glory, and if such is our happy portion may we be found ready and willing to do His will at whatever cost, with consequent blessing to others and glory to His great name.

*"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will."*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour,
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."*

COWPER.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

In 1 Corinthians 13 we have a hymn in praise of love. What particular view of love is here portrayed? It is the *effect* of love on the person who loves.

It is often said that love must have an object: but there is not a word in this chapter about the object of the love so highly praised. Rather does it set forth the way in which love moulds the character of the person who loves. Love created patience in Jacob when he served seven years for Rachel. During these years, in the day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night, yet "they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her". Love endureth all things; love never faileth.

This work of divine love is perfectly seen only in Jesus. He suffered long and was kind: He envied not; He did not vaunt Himself, was not puffed up. He did not behave Himself unseemly, did not seek His own, was not easily provoked, thought no evil; rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth: bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things, endured all things. He never failed.

ON the subject of Christian baptism there is much common ground which is agreed and valued by those who appeal to Scripture as their ultimate authority; though it is also true that differing standpoints have been taken on some aspects. A tendency to avoid the subject exists, because of the risk of disagreement on these matters where opposite views are possible.

Christian baptism is, however, a matter of importance which it would be a mistake to neglect, and there must surely be considerable agreement as to its significance and meaning, and on the importance of this. This article therefore attempts first to outline the meaning and importance of baptism. It then passes to a consideration of the manner of baptism, and later to the subjects of baptism. A common view is possible on many, though not all, of the points discussed in the later sections; where differing judgments are possible attention is drawn to Scriptures which seem to support the differing points of view. It must surely be felt that if Scripture (considered as a whole) gives no firm ruling on some of these matters, but rather leaves them open to spiritual judgment on the part of interested persons, then a fair statement of both sides of the question should be the aim; much may be lost by dogmatic presentation of one viewpoint only to the exclusion of what may be said on the other side.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

A person who is baptised thereby takes the stand of being a Christian.

The process of being baptised corresponds, but is not identical with, a vital inward change; it is the sign that this inward change of conversion to Christ has taken place. Examples which make this clear are given in Scripture, and reference to two of these should be sufficient. Cornelius the centurion and others with him believed the message concerning Christ, and the Holy Spirit descended upon them, *before* the matter of baptism was raised. Having already received the Holy Spirit it was obvious that baptism ought to follow and could not be withheld from them (Acts 10: 44-47). Almost the opposite case was that of Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8: 13-21), who was baptised soon after hearing the preaching of Philip, but later was told that his heart was not right in the sight of God. These examples make it plain that baptism and conversion are not the same thing, and either is possible apart from the other, though they should normally go together. It is true, however, that some scriptures do seem to link repentance and remission of sins very closely with baptism; it would seem that special emphasis is placed on baptism when the appeal is to Jews (see, for example, Acts 2: 38; 22: 16). The Jews were responsible in a special way for the rejection of Christ; Christian baptism for converted Jews would perhaps be necessary in a special way as a test of the genuine nature of their repentance and of their faith.

What has been indicated above is supported by the teaching of more than one passage. A single verse which makes clear statements re-

garding the nature of baptism is 1 Peter 3: 21. This passage states what it is *not* as well as what it is. Baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh", that is to say it is not in itself the means of cleansing in the sight of God, either outwardly or inwardly. But the earlier part of the verse speaks of it as a *figure*, just as the passage of the ark through the flood also was a figure. This shows that, while important in itself, still greater importance must be attached to what baptism signifies. The ark and its occupants passed through the waters which brought judgment to others; in a similar way baptism is a sign of the believer's link with Christ, Who died and rose again, and in Whom he too has passed through and beyond condemnation. The verse also speaks of baptism as "the answer of a good conscience". This may carry a double implication. First, only His death and resurrection answer and settle the awakened conscience, bringing peace instead of disquiet when its value is appreciated. Secondly, a person who understands this is prompted by his conscience to do the appropriate thing, to be baptised and thereafter to live the Christian life. Baptism in this sense is a response to Christ, a willing entry into the profession of loyalty to Christ, and an agreement and committal to the responsibilities of the Christian life which must ensue.

Perhaps the most extended passage dealing with the doctrine of baptism is Romans 6. Here the truth is expanded; to be "baptised into Jesus Christ" is to be "baptised into His death". It is also to be "buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (verses 5, 6). Baptism expresses the link with

Christ which exists because of our faith in Him. His death and burial are ours too; we are committed by our baptism to live no longer according to the old sinful inclinations, but rather to demonstrate in our ways that we are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 11). Awareness of His grace to us, and of the responsibilities which this entails, should control and mould our lives, to the exclusion of sinful interests and attitudes. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies . . . but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (verses 12, 13).

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

Little difference of viewpoint will arise on several points under this heading and it may be helpful to consider these first.

First, baptism is described in Scripture using expressions such as "into Christ", "in the name of the Lord Jesus", "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Gal. 3: 27; Acts 8: 16; Matt. 28: 19). What this involves at the actual moment of baptism must be inferred, but it would seem right and needful that some such words should be used at the time. The words quoted from Matthew 28 are the words of Christ Himself in relation to baptism and must be agreed to be specially suitable. This simple form of words gives a profound and comprehensive summary of the Christian revelation, and every word is of value. "With stately impressiveness it asserts the unity of the three (the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) by combining them all within the bounds of the single Name; and then throws up into emphasis the distinctness of

each by introducing them in turn with the repeated article."† "The Hebrew did not think of the name, as we are accustomed to do, as a mere external symbol, but rather as the adequate expression of the innermost being of its bearer."‡ The recipient of Christian baptism is baptised in this great name. He enters into and benefits from the fullest and final revelation of God; he solemnly recognizes, too, that high standards become those who are aware of that revelation. He receives great light and forgiveness and blessing, and is committed to live in ways which correspond with this.

A second, and very different point, on which there must be agreement, is that water is involved in the administration of Christian baptism. Two verses alone should settle this, though others could be added. "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?" was the question asked by the converted Ethiopian (Acts 8: 36); "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised?" was asked in astonishment when the Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10: 47).

The way in which water is used in the act of baptism is a matter on which Scripture is almost silent. It may perhaps be reasonable to assume that Christian baptism would not differ in its method from that adopted by John the Baptist (though Scripture makes it quite plain that the Baptist administered a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming of Christ, and that this was not full Christian baptism). John is said to have baptised in the river of Jordan, and we read of Christ "coming up out of the water" after receiving John's baptism (Mark 1: 5,

10). Along with this Acts 8: 38 may be coupled; Philip and the Ethiopian "went down both into the water . . . and he baptised him". These suggestions as to the mode of baptism are no more than indications, and the biblical examples as a whole do not stress any particular mode. It has been felt by many that total immersion is suggested by the meaning of the word "baptise", and also by the few references already quoted; also that this method expresses well what baptism symbolises, "burial with Christ". Another view should also be respected, the view that the use of the word must also be considered, and that there is a good deal of evidence that the word was sometimes used without this connotation, in Scripture as well as elsewhere. "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1: 5), and "by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12: 13); these are not the only examples of an extended use of the word, not referring at all to water-baptism, where the idea of immersion is not prominent. Indeed the baptism of the Spirit is referred to as a "pouring out" (Acts 2: 17, 33). Those who feel that immersion is not demanded by the scriptural usage and teaching have understandably taken the view that baptism ought not to differ in its method from the Old Testament examples of the symbolic use of water for purification; the process of sprinkling is often mentioned there (Num. 8: 7, 19: 13, 18, 19, 20; Ezek. 36: 25, etc.).

Nothing in Scripture would indicate that baptism may only be administered by particular persons. Converts were baptised soon after conversion, and no emphasis is placed on the persons who baptised them or their qualifications. It is evident, however, that these would be interested persons having a longer standing in the faith into which the

† Quoted from B. B. Warfield, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Truth" in *Biblical Foundations* (p. 99). London: The Tyndale Press, 1958.

new converts were introduced.

THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

Adult persons who were baptised on conversion to Christ form the majority of the sample subjects of baptism given in the New Testament. The Ethiopian, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, and the jailor at Philippi are representative examples of this class, though very different in other ways (Acts 8, 9, 10, 16). There can be little doubt that baptism should follow conversion in cases of this kind. Also, there is no support in Scripture for the situation which sometimes exists in which a person has accepted the claims of Christ, in true faith, and yet remains unbaptised; this is an abnormal and unsatisfactory situation. The examples already quoted show that baptism is appropriate almost immediately upon conversion.

Though there are several examples of this kind, there is not a single person amongst them who belonged in advance to a Christian environment. A missionary situation is described in the book of Acts, and the persons concerned were unaware of, or in some cases antagonistic to, the Christian message before conversion.

Some passages refer just as plainly to the baptism of whole households; the households of Lydia, of the jailor, and of Stephanas (Acts 16: 15, 33; 1 Cor. 1: 16). The existence of these passages is perhaps the basic reason why some have felt it suitable to administer Christian baptism in a different way in these different circumstances; where the persons involved belong to a circle in which at least one member is already a Christian. Verses which do not refer to baptism at all, but which do show that persons connected by natural ties to a believer are in some sense in a different position from

complete outsiders, are to be found in 1 Corinthians 7: 12-14. Some have felt that baptism of households is suitable, in the light of these passages, when either or both of the parents are Christians, as a recognition of the place of privilege and opportunity in which such persons stand. No very decisive conclusion is possible from Scripture alone. It is possible to speculate about both the ages and the faith of the members of the households which are said to have been baptised in Scripture, but the truth is that Scripture is silent on both matters. It cannot be said that there were, nor that there were not, children in these households; it can no more be asserted that they were all believers, than that some were not. About Lydia's household nothing is said on either count. The Authorised Version may appear to say that the jailor's household were all believers, but the words are really not decisive.

In passing it should be mentioned that another verse which is sometimes quoted (Acts 8: 37) is also not decisive, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The Ethiopian belonged in any case to the category for whom the only possible procedure for baptism would be the post-conversion one; but, also, verse 37 is unanimously agreed to have little textual support. Reference to almost any other translation will reveal that this verse is omitted. Such a verse, interpolated later, does not have the authority of the rest of Scripture. It may indicate the view and practice of the early Church, or it may indicate a point of view only.

The practice of infant baptism in an almost indiscriminate way is prevalent today. This is defended in part on the grounds of the Scriptures already quoted, referring to households; also, advocates of infant baptism support it on grounds of paral-

lelism between the ideas of the Old Testament people of God and the rite of circumcision, and the New Testament people of God and baptism. It is true that an occasional verse links the ideas of baptism and circumcision rather closely (Col. 2: 11, 12), but such a deduction from analogy may perhaps be felt to be less compelling than more direct scriptural teaching on the matter, and this does not appear to have been given. If, however, the idea of household baptism is felt to be sufficiently suggested in Scripture to be allowable, infant baptism is not really a further step. The most unsatisfactory feature of infant baptism may be its widespread and indiscriminate use, where the parents themselves are Christian only in a loose and nominal sense. That such a misuse can occur is primarily an evidence of improper church discipline, and does not necessarily vitiate the principle of baptism on which it is based.

To conclude it seems appropriate to refer briefly to Paul's words in

1 Corinthians 1: 13-16. He is thankful that he himself had baptised so few at Corinth, since a wrong construction might have been placed on such activities on a larger scale. Christ sent him not to baptise, but to preach the gospel. This is not to belittle baptism, but to put fundamental matters first, to aim at the basic spiritual changes of which baptism is the outward sign and confirmation. But he is able to recollect one or two individuals at Corinth whom he had baptised; and then, as an afterthought, he remembers the household of Stephanas too. The reading of this passage gives the impression that Paul at least was conscious of no great problem here, and that different cases were dealt with in different ways, without any need to legislate or to come down strongly on one side of the fence in such a matter. Avoidance of harsh rulings and respect for the views of others may thus be the wisest course. The meaning of our baptism, in its repercussions on our lives and attitudes, will be demonstrated by such a spirit as well as in other ways.

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS

J. S. BLACKBURN

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT

“CHRIST . . . in whom, on believing, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1: 13, Moule). “The Holy Spirit of the promise”: this name immediately takes us back to John 14 to 16. The Holy Spirit was promised to the disciples.

Without Him they would indeed have been orphans.

On December 9th, 1934, in a deserted house in the town of Miaosheo in China, a baby, not yet three months old cried and slept alone through the night and on into the next day. On the hillside outside the town lay the bodies of her young American father and mother, cut

down by the swords of a band of Communists. None dared to come near the house, for the Reds were still only three miles away. Could there have been a more complete embodiment of the word orphan than this helpless little life, so powerless in itself, surrounded by brutal enemies, and with no friend near? In the context of the new life within, the disciples would indeed have been orphans, except for the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of the promise. What was the promise? The answer is relevant to Ephesians, for in 1: 13 we are so distinctly referred back to it. "The Father . . . shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John 14: 16). "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (14: 26). "He will guide you into all truth: . . . and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (16: 13, 14). Where shall we find words to present the life, the peace, the blessing which are the potential of this unction from the Holy One? It lies behind all that follows about the gift and office of the Holy Spirit.

First, then, we need to know *when* we receive Him. We need to have assurance about this, for there is no part of the teaching of Scripture regarding the Holy Spirit on which there is greater diversity of view than on this question. When does a person receive Him? The definite answer is here in this verse in Ephesians we are now considering. In the Acts there is in fact a considerable variety as to the stage in the experience of individuals at which the Holy Spirit was given, and also as to the human instruments and their part in the gift. It is necessary to believe either that such varieties

were intended to continue throughout the Church's history, or that some of them were special cases appropriate to the introductory phase of Christianity. We only need to hear the united voices of the epistles to understand that all but one were special cases, not to continue. There are two real questions. Is the Holy Spirit received at the moment of faith in Christ, or before, or after? Is the laying on of hands necessary? In Acts 8: 17 at Samaria, the Holy Ghost was given through the laying on of hands, and likewise at Ephesus in Acts 19: 6. In all other recorded cases, the Spirit was given without laying on of hands. At the first preaching to the Gentiles the Spirit was given at the moment of belief, but in all other instances as a distinct event subsequent to belief. The usage of the epistles shows that the first preaching to the Gentiles provided the pattern intended to be permanent, and the rest were exceptional events for special reasons connected with the introduction of the new faith. In 1 Corinthians 12: 13 "are we *all* baptised by one Spirit". Who is this "all"? All that in every place invoke the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Galatians 3: 2 the fact that the Galatians (who had fallen from grace, and were not running well) had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, is made the ground of the argument as to how they were to be made perfect. But here in Ephesians 1: 13, quoted in opening, is the most definite passage on the subject. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit "on believing".

The promise of John 14 contains the words, "that He (the Holy Spirit) may abide with you for ever". The irrevocable nature of this immense gift is emphasised here also in the reference to seal and earnest, and especially "until the redemption of

the purchased possession". The Holy Spirit as seal gives final certainty to the covenant of salvation. The matter is finalised and settled and nothing can ever open again the question of salvation once a person is sealed with the Spirit. The thought of the Holy Spirit as earnest contains at least three elements. That He has been given is the certainty of our final entrance into the fulness of the life with God in heaven. The Holy Spirit is also the foretaste of that fruition: and this involves the fact that what is given with Him is the same in kind with what the saints will enjoy in heaven. What He gives (especially strength with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith) will, in quality and kind, never be surpassed in heaven. It will, thank God, be surpassed in the measure of our appreciation and response. The grapes of Eshcol were only in part a picture of the earnest. They were the very fruit of Canaan itself and therefore a true foretaste. But they did not involve the certainty, for the individual concerned, of entrance into the land. In this respect they fall short of being a true picture of the earnest.

In 2: 22 we have the consequences for the saints collectively, of the gift of the Spirit. "In (the Lord) ye also are being built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit". The truth that God has ever desired to dwell amongst His people, and what was required before this could be true, is a thread which runs through Scripture. It was first known as an immediate consequence of redemption. "The Lord . . . is become my salvation . . . and I will prepare Him an habitation". "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the

Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established" (Exodus 15: 2 and 7). This was true in an outward and ceremonial sense. Since an accomplished redemption has been achieved by the blood of Christ, then there can be in an inward, spiritual, true and final sense, an habitation for God. God now dwells in His people as His house by the Holy Spirit. The central thought here is nearness to God, both for those who were distant and for those who were nigh only in the old outward sense, for we have access through Christ by one Spirit to the Father.

In these verses we have the church as the temple in verse 21 and as the habitation or dwelling-place in verse 22, and it is with the latter that the activity of the Holy Spirit is especially connected. In the Psalms the meaning of these two figures in the experience of God's people becomes clear. The temple is connected in the thoughts and experience of the saints with that distinctness and separateness of God in His holiness, in which He is the object of worship. The house is connected, on the other hand, with His people's experience of joy in nearness to Him. "I went . . . to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day" (Psalm 42: 4). "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." (Psalm 26: 8). "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures" (Psalm 36: 7, 8).

Still considering the positive gain of what the Holy Spirit has established, we come to Ephesians 3: 5. The new things, hitherto secret and

hidden from the sons of men "are now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." These are the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; they have not entered into the hearts of men, but God hath prepared them for those that love Him. The same Spirit who has sealed each believer, and by whom God dwells in the church, thus makes available in this place and to these people the knowledge of the depths of God.

This superabounding wealth of activity by the Spirit of God fills out the concept that the saints are accessible to spiritual influences in heavenly places, and it is manifestly of the greatest consequence that we should also learn how our actions can affect our reception of such spiritual activity on the part of God by His Spirit.

Before leaving the doctrinal part of the epistle behind, however, we find another element in the positive result of the Spirit's work, and this is the unity of the Spirit in 4: 3. This idea really arises from chapter 2, the intervening chapter being parenthetical, though supremely important. Note again the reiteration of the fact of unity in chapter 2. Jew and Gentile believers have been made *one* (verse 14), reconciling both unto God in *one* body (verse 16): and both have access by *one* Spirit to the Father. The first call by which the saints are to make effective their response to God's blessing is to remain faithful to this unity. We are not called to make a unity. God has done this, and we are called to translate into practice the unity which God has formed by His Spirit. No modern cleavage threatens the maintenance of this unity so deeply as that between Jew and Gentile. Everything in race, history, aspirations, diet, worship and habits tend-

ed to separate: but to maintain it, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

It might have been expected that the call would be to keep the unity of the body: but it is evident from the next few verses that the unity of the Spirit contains other elements than the unity of the body: there is the unity of the faith and the unity of the children of God. The "unity of the Spirit" also emphasises the inwardness of this oneness in essence, and hence that action in the moral rather than in the organisational realm is required to keep it. Lowliness and meekness, longsuffering and forbearance on the part of individuals can and do meet God's desire here, rather than the efforts of religious politicians to recreate an external and organisational unity.

The evidences of the fact of the presence and activity of God by His Spirit in the church appear in the Acts. Acts 5: 3 shows the fact of the presence of God by the Spirit: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to *the Holy Ghost?*" Acts 13: 2 illustrates the activity of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

The references to the Holy Spirit in the hortatory part of Ephesians very strikingly underline that the central requirement from the believer is behaviour which does not hinder the Spirit in His mighty works in the saints, but rather forwards them and co-operates with Him. There are four:

Grieve not the Spirit (4: 30).

Be filled with the Spirit (5: 18).

Take the sword of the Spirit
(6: 17).

Pray in the Spirit (6: 18).

I think I can see a connection between the first of these and the Lord Jesus being grieved in the Gospel. "And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13: 58). In another place He was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. The mighty works of that Mighty One were diminished ("not many") by His being grieved. If no less a miracle than this has taken place, that the Holy Spirit of God has taken up His dwelling in and amongst the saints, where are His mighty works? We humbly thank God that we *do* see something of His mighty works in the saints. Why not more? It is because our behaviour grieves Him. If we put away lying, let not the sun go down upon our wrath, the stealer steal no more, the Spirit could take the things of Christ and show them to us. If kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness displaced bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking, then more of His mighty works would be seen.

"Be filled with the Spirit" is not, like Romans 12: 1, a crisis in the believer's history and experience, nor does it denote a moment when he "arrives". It is a constantly repeated or habitual thing. By the contrast with being drunk with wine, there seems to be a reference to our intake in spiritual things. If our intake is in the things of the Spirit, that is, the things of Christ, then behaviour will be dictated by the Spirit and not by wine. Read again how this also is illustrated in the Acts. It was when they forgot themselves and were full of enthusiasm for Christ that they became "filled with the Spirit" (Acts 4: 31). Who could have conceived that in

such circumstances their prayer should not have contained a single hint of concern for the safety of their own skins? They prayed for boldness in the cause of Christ, and for signs and wonders in His Name. These are the conditions when men and women, with the eye away from themselves, and filled with Christ, are filled with the Holy Spirit.

In what sense is the Word of God the sword of the Spirit? Akin to the fact that the Holy Spirit has been the Revealer, the Word of God is in a sense forged by the Spirit. The sword of the Spirit is Scripture as the Word of God. "Observe that the Lord Himself, in His temptation, the history of which should be compared with this whole passage, used exclusively verbal citations from Scripture as His sword. No suggestion could be more pregnant than this as to the abiding position of the written Word under the dispensation of the Spirit" (Moule). "Taking" the sword of the Spirit involves knowing it, and the deliberate recognition that without it the enemy cannot be overcome.

"Prayer and supplication in the Spirit" seem to say that all true prayer is the outcome of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit poured out on Israel will be the Spirit of grace and supplication, and then only will their prayer be true prayer and reach the throne. Of ourselves we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but in and with our prayers the Spirit Himself makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. It is because God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts that we cry "Abba, Father".

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

D. W. PATERSON

COLOSSIANS 1: 14-29, 2: 1-4

OF Paul's corrective writings probably none is more relevant to the 1960's than the epistle to the Colossians. Chapter 4: 16 reminds us it is to be read also to the Laodiceans.

Not only are present-day difficulties delineated; the Spirit of God also provides the answer. From chapter 2 it is evident the Colossian church was troubled with false teachers — Judaistic, who taught formalism and ritualism, and gnostic who brought in the lawless activity of men's minds. These troubles are with us today in full measure. The answer to both these difficulties is found in our text — the pre-eminence of Christ.

In the scripture section at the head of this paper we find the pre-eminence of Christ clearly taught in three spheres where mind, and heart, and will are engaged. Christ is the firstborn of every creature; first, not in time, but in rank. Consider it my soul! In the past two centuries there have been new theories of creation, and men today have not finished finding new theories for the origin and destiny of the universe. The Bible does not argue. The fact is plainly stated. Christ is the centre; Christ is pre-eminent, in the sphere of creation. In verse 16 there are three prepositions, in the A.V. "by", and "for", which throw a flood of light on the passage. (See footnote in New Translation, J.N.D.). The first preposition shows Christ as the inventive genius behind creation; the second shows Him as the instrumental agent; the third shows Him as the object of creation. He is pre-eminent! He both made and sustains all. Then in verse 18 He is the

head of the body, the *Church*. This truth also is being challenged today. It is topical in the modern ecumenical movement. An earthly, visible head is much more to man's taste. In Popery, of course, it is, plainly seen. The Establishment, since the Reformation, looks to the reigning sovereign. But He (Christ) is Head of the Church. He is Head over all things *to* the Church in Ephesians. Here, He is Head *of* the Church. The magicians in Egypt, confronted with the miracle of life, had to confess "This is the finger of God." The truth of resurrection leaves His adversaries far behind, and in resurrection life Christ takes His rightful place, the first place. Who can challenge Him where He is? Headship is a wonderful theme. He is head of every man, head of the heathen, headstone of the corner, head of all principality and power, head over all things. He is *the* head. Gladly we say "and Thou art exalted as head above all." He is pre-eminent.

Then too, in verse 19 we read, "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Who can understand the truth of this *person*? Certainly not the writer. Wisdom's course is to receive it. Gladly we do so. Men want a man. Is it not on everyone's lips? Anyone who thinks wants someone to lead us out of the present mess. The world will have one who comes in his own name. We have such an One, Who came in His Father's name. These are wonderful words in chapter 2: 9, "All the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There He is, not in incarnation only, but also in resurrection. His is full Godhead glory, not something less called Divinity. Who can

compare with Him? In very truth He is pre-eminent, blessed be His holy name.

All this is vitally important. We must sanctify the Lord God in our hearts if we are to render a reason for the hope that is in us.

*“What think ye of Christ is the test
To try both your state and your
scheme,*

*You cannot think right of the rest,
If you do not think rightly of Him.”*

As a practical issue beloved, do we in fact see Him “high and lifted up?” In the sphere of our thinking, do we give him the first place? Is He pre-eminent?

From verse 20 to verse 22 we enter a new sphere — the grand historical facts of Christianity. Here the heart is engaged. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. In verse 22 we read of the body of His flesh — His walk. Here indeed is a pathway to think upon. “Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” He was Jehovah’s servant, Messiah, Son of Man, Son of the Father’s love. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners. He did no sin; He knew no sin; in Him was no sin. “We beheld His glory” said the disciples. Well might we look upon Jesus as He walked. Consider His words. “They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” He was altogether that which He said He was. What a delightful climax to the end of the debate in the temple, “No man durst ask Him any more questions” (Matt. 22: 46). Little wonder the officers said “Never man spake like this man.” But then too, think of His works. His parables, it has been beautifully said, were spoken miracles; His miracles were acted parables. He made both the deaf to hear — organ of reception — and the dumb to

speak — organ of response. Well may all join to say — we do ourselves — He hath done all things well. His life is wonderful; but of His death, who can tell? In this very chapter we have redemption (verse 14) the forgiveness of sins (verse 14) peace (verse 20). These are wonderful truths, enjoyed individually doubtless, but also bringing before us the grand universal sphere of blessing, man brought into relation with God, and God resting in His love. And all this is absolutely dependent upon His death, for He tasted death for everything (Heb. 2: 9). Well might we exclaim — He is pre-eminent! And in the consideration of such activity of love, are we not wrought upon in our affections, and moved to worship Him?

But the challenge of the mental and emotional spheres has to be faced, and from chapter 1: 23 and 2: 4 we have the practical sphere where the will is engaged. The first word in verse 23 is “if”. What is our answer going to be? In verse 27 we read “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” “Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Cor. 12: 5). But in Laodicea the Lord is seen outside, knocking at the heart door and saying, “If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3: 20).

The question is then, if Christ is pre-eminent in the mental and emotional spheres, will He also be pre-eminent in this practical sphere where the will is engaged? If He is in our hearts, does He also dwell in our hearts? If Christ is resident, in our hearts, is He also *president*? The apostle’s own example urges us on. He preaches, verse 28. He is a minister, verse 25. He suffers, verse 24. He labours, verse 29. He is in great conflict, chapter 2: 1. It is, alas, a day of lukewarmness. Many

are at ease in Zion. The prophet is a fool; the spiritual man is mad. "Be not righteous over much" is the general cry. But Christ in you is the "hope of glory". In the glory true values will be declared. The crowning day is coming. Christ will be vindicated; so will His own. Let us "Swing the heart door widely open, bid Him enter while you may." Let Him enter all the areas of our hearts. May He be pre-eminent. Will there be suffering? Of course. Not in

vain are we reminded that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. But, "How will recompense His smile, the sufferings of this little while."

In conclusion may it be said that in a true conversion, mind and heart and will are engaged. Be the reader unconverted, or many years on the road, may the appeal of these verses, in these three spheres, encourage us one and all to "Crown Him, Lord of all."

ELIJAH IN THE CAVE

R. THOMSON

AT Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18) we see the power of Jehovah in association with the strength of Elijah. This was an occasion of glorious victory, only to be followed by circumstances of peculiar testing for Elijah. The threat of Jezebel pronounced against him had such an effect upon the one who had witnessed so faithfully for God, that he arose and went for his life.

What had brought about this remarkable change in the movements of the prophet? Perhaps he was overwrought in body and mind; and with his eye upon circumstances rather than upon Jehovah, he ran away. But where could he flee? How striking that the first place mentioned is Beersheba (the well of the oath). Abraham had been this way before, giving it this name, and had proved God in a time of great crisis with Abimelech. Ishmael had been turned out from the presence of Abraham, and now Abimelech had spoken the word of cheer to him, "God is with thee in all that thou doest." A covenant was made

with Abimelech, and Abraham called on the Name of the Lord, the everlasting God. Could Elijah do the same, and find his encouragement in God?

Here, Elijah parted with his servant, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. But is not God the God of the wilderness, as well as the God of Mount Carmel? This wonderful knowledge Elijah will shortly prove, for God will sustain His servant through every period of testing. Under the juniper tree, introspective, he requested death, desiring the Lord to take away his life because of his unworthiness.

Having compassion for His overwrought servant, an angel is sent from heaven to provide food, water and heat. From his sleep, Elijah is awakened to eat once, and twice, for the Lord knew the long journey His prophet was to take, and would prepare him for it. After forty days and nights he came to Mount Horeb, the mount of God. It was the mountain in the desert, where God

had given the law and commandments to His people, Israel; and was now, truly a barren scene for Elijah. Instead of the boldness which once marked him, he is now found to be hiding in a cave.

What can he say to God who sees him, and asks, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He may speak of his zeal, and the guilt of God's people; or even of his own loneliness and fear; but what are really God's resources, and His mind for His servant prophet? There was still mighty power with Him for judgment, as seen in the wind, the earthquake and the fire; yet the greatest requisite of all was to hear the voice of the Lord and enjoy His Presence. So now, the still, small voice brings again the searching question. "What doest thou here, Elijah?", and also along with it, He gives direction to the prophet regarding forthcoming events.

He has to return to the wilderness of Damascus (activity), and anoint Hazael (whom God watches over) to be king over Syria. Also, Jehu (Jehovah is He) is to be anointed king over Israel: and Elisha (God is salvation) to be anointed as prophet in his own stead. God was to manifest His power and wisdom in judgment, establishing that which Elijah had begun, and left off. What a revelation this must have been to the weary and downcast prophet! This was the proof that God was still in pre-eminence and power, and by way of encouragement to His loved servant, He announces the presence of seven thousand in Israel, who were faithful to Him and separated altogether from the worship of Baal.

Elijah, now in obedience to the word of the Lord, finds Elisha ploughing in the field with twelve yoke of oxen, and he with the twelfth. Evidently Elisha is a very industrious

man, able to keep rank, and not ashamed to be the last. However, as Elijah cast his mantle upon him, it revealed that he was not fully prepared to follow the prophet, showing some measure of reservation because of family relationships. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee," says Elisha. Elijah gave him perfect liberty to do this; and on returning, we see Elisha slaying his ploughing oxen, boiling their flesh, and giving to the people to eat. By this action, he fully declared that he had left the work of the field, to be the constant servant to Elijah and minister unto him.

Although by now, Elijah had been relieved of much prominent work in Israel; he was still the prophet of God to declare Him, and guide the people to Him. Very serious evil had been practised by King Ahab, and his wife, Jezebel, in connection with Naboth and his vineyard. Not only had his vineyard, which was the inheritance of his fathers, been confiscated, but he had been stoned to death through the wicked plotting of Jezebel.

Elijah is now called of the Lord to go and speak the word of judgment to Ahab, and actually found him in Naboth's vineyard, in the act of possessing it. Ahab greeted him with, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Now we see Elijah in all the boldness which once marked him, pronouncing the judgment of God upon the wicked king; "I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." The outpouring of evil was now to be executed upon Ahab and his posterity, and Jezebel also was to have an ignominious end. One bright spot, however, is recorded; that of the humbling of Ahab in the sight of the Lord, and the postponement of the evil to a later date.

How wonderful is the longsuffering and kindness of God!

The last act of judgment given to Elijah to pronounce, is concerning Ahab's son, Ahaziah (2 Kings 1). Having fallen from an upper chamber, he lay seriously ill, despairing of life. Messengers are sent to Baal-zebub, god of Ekron, to enquire whether the king should recover. Elijah is now commissioned to meet the servants of Ahaziah and say to them, "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?" Also, the word from the Lord is given them that the king shall not recover from his sickness, but shall surely die.

Ahaziah receiving the word with dismay, sends a company of fifty, with a captain, to bring down Elijah. The prophet, in all the dignity of a man of God, commands fire from heaven to descend and consume them. Thus the threat of the king

is righteously answered by the Lord. Again, a second fifty and captain are sent, only to receive the same fate and judgment as the others. Even another fifty and captain are sent; and how becoming it is to see the leader fall upon his knees before Elijah, not only acknowledging him as a man of God, but praying for his life, and his fifty men. This is granted, and the angel of the Lord requests Elijah to go down and see Ahaziah. In the presence of the king, the prophet fearlessly tells him that because he sought Baal-zebub, and did not enquire of the God of Israel, he shall not recover, but shall surely die.

So we come to the last acts of the prophet of God, Elijah (God is Jehovah), in the vindication of the true God of Israel. Soon, the testimony so faithfully rendered, is to be answered by his translation to heaven, a glorious termination to a tried and tested service for the Lord.

GOD'S VICTORY OVER EVIL

F. W. BOYD

EVIL takes many forms. Some forms of it, such as illness, death and disaster are usually beyond man's control. Other forms are man made due to his innate selfishness. He takes what he can for himself and injures his neighbour thereby. He withholds his homage and duty to God and in his self-will even defrauds his Maker.

Evil in man is called sin, and as we know, it characterizes our whole being. Our thoughts, our words and our bodies are subjected to our minds to produce evil actions. How many of us who have learned to love our Lord and to value His perfection, desire to be free from this characteristic. If this were a simple, easy

matter of will, Scripture would not need to say so much about it. The mind needs to be enlightened by the Scriptures for an intelligent dealing with the matter, and the working of the Spirit of God is the indispensable power.

Romans 6 begins "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." Here it does not say "continue to sin", but "continue in sin", that is under the dominion of sin. Paul is dealing in chapter 6 with sin as the power that reigns in the world. Later he deals with our sinful nature, using the expression "sin in the flesh" (8: 3). These two usages are both in contrast with

Paul's use of the plural "sins" or the verb "sin", to signify acts of sin or offences.

There is only one means of deliverance from sin. It will dominate me as long as I live, therefore I must reckon myself dead to sin. This is exactly what is contemplated in figure here in the first few verses. This is why baptism is referred to. Baptism is obviously a symbol of death but in each place it is mentioned, the important thing is the meaning of baptism, the working out of baptism as applied to the problems of the Christian life.

Romans 6 applies baptism, not as a ceremony, but as the working out of its meaning as the means of deliverance from sin for those who have previously been baptised.

Having been baptised, I have (in figure) gone into death in Christ's death (6: 3) not in the atoning sense, but dying unto sin. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (6: 6). In the picture-language of the New Testament, the old man is a coat, that is the manner of life of one living under the dominion of sin. Here is no thought of resurrection, but absolute obliteration in death and burial. I see in figure the old man removed in this drastic and final way. Thank God there is no resurrection for that man. But this is negative; there is nothing for God in it. My true life must now be positive: "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (6: 4). And "likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (6: 11). Scripture is careful not to say that sin is dead. It is myself that is to be reckoned dead to it, and so free from its domina-

tion. I am "married" to another — "to him who is raised from the dead," that I should bring forth fruit unto God (7: 4).

How does this work out in practice? Paul shows clearly in chapter seven that the sin which reigns in the world, also dwells in me (a new discovery — 7: 17, 20) and controls the flesh (7: 25). There are now two opposite principles working in me. With the mind I serve the law of God and with the flesh the law of sin. To reckon myself to be dead, as in chapter six, helps much, but it is not the full answer. Neither is it practical to pretend to reach chapter eight and despise chapter seven as though one could reach sinless perfection in this life.

Still if I commit sins, if I serve in any way the law of sin, and knowing that in me (in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing, I might expect condemnation. I must turn to God for deliverance and find in chapter eight that "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (8: 1). With the mind I am serving the law of God.

I see in my baptism the old man crucified with Christ. Here God's side is seen, in how He deals with sin dwelling within. Sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, He has condemned it (instead of me). He takes account of its actions no more. And the righteous requirements of the law (New Translation) can be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. There is no power for a sinless walk in myself. I can only touch this in the power and by the leading of the Holy Spirit of God.

Again, the next few verses are intensely practical and link with the "mind" of chapter seven. My mind which controls my actions can be either carnal, the mind of the flesh,

or it can be spiritual.

In spite of occasional failure (I do not mean persistent, wilful sinning) I am not "in the flesh"; I am "in the Spirit", if the Spirit dwells in me, as He does in every Christian, and I am brought to know sonship and to say "Father". There is no intention that these things should be held as mere words. Do I really know God as Father? How many who have meditated on this and made the truth of it their own have been, on the one hand amazed at the dignity and preciousness of the relationship, and on the other hand, by this very dignity and holiness have, when temptation came along, been able to set it aside as not befitting a son of God.

Ephesians 6 deals not only with the effect of evil but with the forces controlling it, e.g. principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world. One may see the effect of these acting through men on a world scale but how do they affect me personally? Is the equilibrium of my mind never disturbed by doubts as to God, or salvation, or evil thoughts? As the serpent brought doubt with regard to God into the mind of Eve, so I see that these things come from evil powers outside myself whether aggravated by ill health or not. For these I need, not armour of steel, but a breastplate of righteousness and loins girt about with the truth. Practical righteous-

ness cannot be set aside; it is a defence in itself. The shield of faith is also indispensable — faith to lay hold of the promises, faith to trust God for my future welfare, faith to walk today. Connected with this is the helmet, the hope of salvation. When my feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace I am enabled to advance spiritually, instead of idly wasting my time, even as Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." His mark was resurrection.

The sword of the Spirit indicates, not passive resistance to the powers of evil as suggested by armour, but attack. Also, I am not alone in this. As with the question of sin, I need "to walk after the Spirit", to be "spiritually minded", to be "in the Spirit" to please God, so to gain advantage over these powers of evil, the Holy Spirit is necessary to defeat them coupled with that remarkable weapon "all prayer".

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. I need my mind charged with it before it can be used. It is no use to me in the pages of a closed book. Again the Spirit is the only means for effective prayer and supplication. The scope of this is to bring in all saints, for their blessing and for their victory over evil, and so the enemy takes a further defeat to the glory of God.



IT would seem that the Lord Jesus Christ called young men to follow Him. Many years after His death and resurrection, Paul mentions His appearing to His disciples and explains that many of them "are alive unto this day." They had been comparatively young when He called them. Of course, He knew what He was doing. There was a lifetime of work to be done. There were lessons to learn which fresh young minds could absorb. There were hardships to face which young bodies could endure. For the most part, it was youth He needed. So it is today.

THE CHURCH IN THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

J. N. SHEPHERD

SUCH confusion seems to exist everywhere in Christendom on the subject of the church, that it is vital to seek from God's word the truth about it. Many only use the term in reference to a building of stone; many more refer it to one or other of the denominations of what is called the Christian religion; yet others, who have formed some sect even more arrogantly assume to themselves the entitlement to be considered as the church of God in the world at this moment of history.

It is the intention in the course of a few short articles to trace from the Scriptures several simple lines of thought about it and for this purpose to do so under three main headings.

1. The church in the eternal purpose of God,
2. The church as established and maintained by God in this world.
3. The church in the company of her Lord in the coming glory.

It is, of course, at once evident that any sort of comprehensive review of these three titles from the Scriptures, if it were a possibility, would be an immense undertaking and far beyond the capacity of the present writer, but surely every consideration of the thoughts and ways of God must be for our blessing. It is with this in view that we would turn to the Word of God to seek in it a little of what we are given to know of His eternal purpose with regard to the church.

Relatively little is told us in the Scriptures with regard to eternity.

Evidently this is due, at any rate in part, to the smallness of our capacity to understand eternal things. Our finite minds and bodies can only fully grasp what is finite, but in His gracious kindness God has given to us, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, His Spirit, in order to lead us into all the truth. Nevertheless, although we are given glimpses of our God in His personal greatness and glory, both in and before creation, there are comparatively few passages which let us into a view of the counsels and plans of eternity; but there is the greatest and highest privilege for the saint of God in tracing in these what His thought was, and the means by which He carried it out.

In the first place we find that the thoughts of God were concerned with the pleasure of His beloved Son. At the end of Revelation 4 we are specifically told that the sum of the creation was for the pleasure of God, and how well we understand that it was carried out by the Son for Himself (Colossians 1: 16), in order that by it, as by everything else that He has ever done, He might give delight to the heart of God. What a joy it is to our hearts to be able to trace the single-hearted devotion of the Son to the Father, which would never move in anything except to fill His heart with added joy. This too is reciprocal love, for Each loved the Other in the affections of Godhead from all eternity. The full ring of those majestic words "Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world" echoes down from the courts of eternal glory, as we hear the Father say "This is my beloved

Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And love delights to give: and what has the Father given? When all that filled the wide creation belonged to Him, what was it possible for Him yet to receive? What would He really choose to have, for He could say "All things that the Father hath are mine"? As we read the precious "breathings" of love found in John 17, it is even more wonderful to find those oft-repeated words again "as many as thou hast given me", "thou gavest them me", "those whom thou hast given me", etc., and to know that the treasured gift was a company of people and that they are treasured not alone for His own sake — although in this too they are the objects of eternal love — but yet more for the preciousness to Him of the One Who gave them to Him.

No gift could so have answered the desires of the glorious Recipient and no gift could have been more characteristic of the heart of the Giver, for it was all that the Loved One longed for. The gift has most perfectly glorified both the Father and the Son.

But if they are to be from men, how could they ever be brought into the circle of divine affection and that in unity and indeed ultimately to be in His blessed company (John 17: 21, 24)?

"In peaceful wonder we adore

The thoughts of love divine,
Which, in that world, for evermore
Unite our lot with Thine."

A very considerable part of God's dealings with men, outlined in the Scripture, was to concern especially the nation of Israel, but this new company could never be bound by the confines of a nation. His thoughts of grace are unrestricted by barriers of any sort in finding a suited love-gift from the Father to

the Son. He has been pleased to draw men and women from every clime and tongue, from the paths of despair, and bondage and sin of every variety, from all the circumstances of what the Lord Jesus described as the "far country". The separating wall between Jew and Gentile ("the middle wall of partition between us", as Paul says) could form no dividing wall to the gracious counsels of God's love.

We learn that part of this plan, as outlined in Ephesians 3, was that even the unseen powers were to have continually before them a perpetual object lesson of God's all-varied wisdom. How striking it is to our hearts that this lesson was not to come from God's natural creation even in its greatest marvels, but from the story of His purpose with regard to those He was to bring out from under the hand of the enemy!

Eternal days will unravel for us the story of that mighty host, each single member of which has been the object of thoughts of divine love, and followed in that same gracious wisdom all the way through the perils of an enemy's land. In spite of all our feebleness in the day in which we live, no greater demonstration of God's wonderful wisdom could be conceived for the "principalities and powers" in the heavens and this was all part of "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord".

As we consider His counsels of mercy, even allowing the unbelief that was to be found in His own people of Israel, to be a means by which His mercy might reach the ends of the world, we might well exclaim with the apostle "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!"

4. THE SAINTS' UNION WITH CHRIST

THE Church as the Body of Christ is a subject, not only of Ephesians, but also of Romans, 1 Corinthians and Colossians. In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 the purpose is to illustrate the saints' union with each other, and the members of the human body to portray the differing occupations of the saints. In these two epistles there is no mention of the head as such, and in particular, no statement that Christ is the Head. In Ephesians the purpose of the use of the figure of the human body is different. Although the oneness of the saints with each other, and the diverse functions of the members is emphasized, the prime purpose is to present the exaltation of Christ, and yet the vital union of the Church with Him. This truth of the union of the saints in the Church with Christ, stated, illustrated and worked out in its practical consequences, is a principal theme of the epistle.

The splendid position given to the raised and ascended Christ is the theme when the words occur, "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1: 23). Are we about to be told that principalities and powers are the powerful enemies of the saints? Are there great names "of wisdom, love and power" borne by men and angels? Christ is far above them all. With the Greeks the expression "all things" was a technical term for the universe, and there was perpetual speculation about its nature and destiny. The universe is under His feet! and He is its Head: and He fills it.

That Christ fills all things has been likened to the sun filling the solar system with its warmth and light.

A better illustration preserves the idea of a Man and His world. One of the greatest names named in the world of the New Testament was that of Augustus. He is named in Luke 2: 1: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." This great man was the architect of the Roman Empire, which gave the majesty of the Roman peace to the world in a system which endured for half a millennium. Some later emperors were, of course, evil men, but in his own day there was no corner of the inhabited earth which did not enjoy in good measure the fruits of the wisdom, mercy and power of Augustus. So, multiplied in the ratio of divine perfection to human limitation, when the glorious Christ fills the universe, there will be no corner of it where His wisdom, love and power in all their divine perfection, will not be a living reality: and this is the glorious Being with whom the saints are united in His body which is the Church.

The Church is His fulness. According to Lightfoot, this word means "the filled condition of a thing, whether a rent to be mended, an idea to be realized, a prophetic plan to be fulfilled". How can the idea be tolerated of something needed to be the complement of so glorious a Being? At least a part of the answer must be to note that Christ is here a Man. The quotation from Psalm 8 confirms this: "all things under His feet." This brings us close to the thought that in the counsel of God it was not good that man should be alone, and Eve was

taken from his body. In accepting manhood, Christ accepted this also, that He needs the Church to be His body, and later His bride.

As we contemplate these themes, let us recall that the words form the closing part of a prayer which asks that the saints may have divine illumination to receive them.

Some of the consequences of our union with Christ are then developed. In human affairs the fruits of victory are not enjoyed only by the persons who sustain the battle and gain the day. In a sense they gain the victory for the benefit of those who come after. Every good enjoyed by the individuals comprising a nation is the fruit of previous victories. A person alive in Britain's heyday stood on ground and enjoyed privileges (as well as responsibilities) determined by every event in the nation's long history, events through which the individuals in question did not live. By the fact of birth into the nation, all its previous victories — Ramillies, Trafalgar, or the Battle of Britain — are put to their account, in the sense that they are in a situation determined by these events. This is a faint picture of the way in which the fruits of Christ's victory are enjoyed by the saints in virtue of their union with Him by the Spirit. They receive the benefit of events which they themselves never experienced, and which involve victory over death and all evil, resurrection to a new life with God, and a settled place with Christ in heavenly places. These events, according to Ephesians, are Christ's awakening to a new life after death (quickenings), His resurrection, and His present session at the right hand of God. From the moment they believe, and by receiving the Spirit are made one with Him, they are on ground determined by His resurrection and ascension; they are quicken-

ed with Him, raised with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places. In the original language, the verbs used here incorporate the preposition "with". God has co-quickened us, co-raised us, and co-seated us together with Christ. In addition to the "with" incorporated in the verbs, however, the Holy Spirit adds in verse 6 "in" Christ Jesus. The "with" is true because the "in" is true. The saints are seated *with* Christ because they are *in* Christ. These decisive events are behind us because of our union with Christ, and we are now alive in a world of which He is the centre, shedding on every part the beams of His love and perfection.

The advance of Ephesians over Romans and 1 Corinthians in respect of the truth of the Body of Christ has already been noted. A very instructive light is also cast on the relative doctrinal positions of Galatians, Romans, Colossians and Ephesians by the selection made in each epistle from the whole sequence of these sacred events: crucified, dead, buried, quickened, raised, seated, all with Christ. In Galatians, only the first occurs, crucified with Christ; and the truth of that epistle is in accordance with this, emphasizing our deliverance from this present evil world. In Romans, the first three occur, crucified, dead, buried with Christ. In Colossians, for the first time the resurrection side is reached, dead, buried, quickened, raised with Christ. In Ephesians, like the stones taken out of the bed of Jordan, there is only the resurrection side, and here only the final height is reached, quickened, raised, and seated with Christ, because in Christ. The question might arise, that the phrase does occur, "dead in trespasses and sins". This however, is a very different thing from being dead with Christ. To be dead in trespasses and

sins is the disease. To have died with Christ is the cure, and this truth we have in Romans and Colossians, but not in Ephesians.

It is striking that, since the truth of Ephesians, "seated in heavenly places in Christ", was true all the time, the apostle withheld it in the earlier epistles. It would appear that either the revelation or the distinct understanding of these profound truths came to him progressively, as the need and inspiration arose.

Continuing our consideration of the union of the saints with Christ in His body, two points of interest appear in chapter 3. One is that the body is involved in the Mystery (verse 6) and the other (verse 9) that part of Paul's ministry was to explain how the mystery is being worked out in practice, the administration of the mystery (New Translation), and this leads directly to the functioning of the body in 4: 8-16. There is found a description of the means employed by the ascended Christ for the making good in their experience of the fruits of the union of the saints with Himself in His body. And the means employed is giving gifts.

He that descended is *the same* who ascended. All the wealth of the grace of His downstooping goes with Him and shines from the place to which He has ascended. As the spoils of His victory, He gives gifts unto men. In this case the gifts are not, as elsewhere, divinely given capabilities for teaching and other forms of service, but these gifts to the whole Church are the men who have received these capabilities, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The form of the words seems to suggest that the last two are one gift.

What follows can be thought of as supplying the answers to certain questions about the gifts. The first

question would be: What is their purpose? "For the equipment of the saints for ministering work, for the edifying of the body of Christ".

Much has been said on the subject of the true aim and intent of the use in Scripture of the figure of the body. Many have thought that, just as the human body is the means whereby the head acts and expresses its will on the outside world, so the members of the body of Christ are the agency whereby He acts and effects His will externally to the body. That this would be a logical and just deduction from the use of the figure is not denied, nor that it is the privilege of Christians to give expression in their actions of the will of Christ; but Scripture itself *always* interprets its use of the figure, and *always* interprets it as having for its aim the growth, development, and building up of the body itself. There is not one explicit interpretation bringing in the action of the Head effecting His will outside the body.

The building up of the body is effected by the ministering work of the saints, and they are equipped for this by the functioning of the gifts, and these in turn are the outflow of the grace of Christ (verse 7) as the living power achieving such result. Nothing could so magnify for us the wonder of our union with Christ as this picture of the grace of Christ as a fathomless sea, flowing out, giving gifts, equipping the saints, and so building up His body.

A second question is: For how long will these gifts, this flow of grace, continue to be effective? "Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" (verse 13). They will continue, that is, until the Church is completed in

heaven, until the building up of the body has reached finality in the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. No intermediate, present and partial perfection can possibly fill out the meaning of this verse. It refers to the final perfecting of the body. Four goals are specified, at which all the saints simultaneously arrive. First, in that glorious day, we shall arrive at the unity of the faith. We have read "there is one faith". If there is one faith, why do saints disagree? The answer is that now we know in part; we have not yet arrived at the unity of the faith. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion" (Isaiah 52: 8). Second, the unity at which all the saints arrive is also the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God. This knowledge is full knowledge, to be attained when we know as we are known. Thirdly, the knowledge of the Son of God is Christian perfection, and hence the third goal is a grown-up man. Fourthly, this is shown to mean, not a collection of full-grown men, but one full-grown man, in that it is the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. There can be little doubt that here (as in 1 Corinthians 12: "So also is Christ), so imbued is the epistle with the oneness of His body with Christ, the expression "the Christ" means Christ and the Church, one body. These then, are the final ends to be brought about by the grace Christ has given. Until then the effect of the gifts will not be withdrawn. We have them today, either in Scripture (apostles and prophets), or in living activity.

This verse is one of the great provisions for the continuance of the faith "till He come". The saints are to break bread and so shew the Lord's death "till He come". The Lord disposes of the lives of His own "till He come" (John 21: 12). His servants occupy "till He come". And to these we have here added that the grace of Christ expressing itself in the gifts to the Church, will continue "till He come".

A third question is: What is the immediate effect of the gifts? "That we be henceforth no more children, . . . but . . . may grow up into Him in all things . . . even Christ, from whom the whole body . . . maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (verse 16).

In connection with the truth of the Church as the Bride of Christ in chapter 5 the idea of union with Christ reaches clear expression: "joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one." It is because the saints are "members of His body" that the Church is the bride of Christ. Eve was first flesh of Adam's flesh and bone of his bone, and afterwards his wife. Just as, when it is a question of His body, the grace of Christ begins all, so here the love of Christ, in its original proof and its present continuing activity, is the fount of blessing. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

CORRESPONDENCE

THE LORD'S SUPPER

THE following questions have been received from Captain Ronald Oliver of Purley. The Editor suggests replies as follows.

Question. In the Church of England the Lord's Supper, besides being a memorial, is also regarded as a sacrament which is defined as an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace. So, they say, as we receive the bread and the wine in our physical bodies, there is a parallel spiritual action going on by which we receive in our souls the very Christ Himself. Do you endorse this?

Answer. There is no trace of a statement in Scripture to the effect that receiving the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper is a sign of our receiving anything at all. The Lord's request was to eat and drink "in remembrance of Me," (Luke 22: 19, 1 Corinthians 11: 24 and 25). Paul's special revelation included also the teaching that in eating and drinking we "show the Lord's death" (1 Corinthians 11: 26). Closely allied to these explanations of the meaning and effect of eating and drinking, we learn in 1 Corinthians 10: 17 that "the bread which we break" symbolises the oneness of the body of Christ, but this is not precisely a statement about eating and drinking, but rather about breaking. We should be satisfied with the meaning and explanation thus explicitly given. The experience of those who are thus satisfied is that there is a wealth of enrichment in assembling on the first day of the week to break bread. In this remembrance the preciousness of the love of Christ

comes afresh again and again over our spirits, and like those in heaven who see the marks of His passion, we are moved to worship.

The idea of "receiving the very Christ Himself" in the acts of eating and drinking arose from plainly false meanings attached to two passages of Scripture. "This is My body — This is My blood," as is so well known, have from the earliest post-scriptural times been taken to indicate that in some subtle way, (variously understood), hidden from our senses, the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. Hence, when we eat and drink them, we receive Him. We believe that this interpretation is simply absurd, in spite of the long succession of illustrious names quoted in support. The body of Christ was then present and acting in gesture and speech. It is simply obvious that in accordance with the language used in every age, He meant "This represents My body, My blood."

The other passage adduced is John 6: 53 to 56. The questions raised here are by no means simple, and the very subtle arguments used to prove that these words, "The bread . . . is My flesh" (John 6: 51) refer to the Lord's Supper may be studied in J. H. Bernard in *Int. Crit. Comm. on St. John* (pp. clxvi to clxxii). Nevertheless the arguments fail. They really depend on the fact that it was believed in the second century. This is doubtless true, almost anything was! Probably there is a connection. I feel sure that the occupation of mind, heart and spirit of those who remember, is the eating and drinking His flesh and blood

of John 6: but this is a long way from saying that in the acts of eating and drinking we receive (eat and drink) Himself. Can anyone believe, in the face of the rest of Scripture, that unless a man has received the Lord's Supper he has not received eternal life?

Another aspect of this question must not be overlooked. If Christ is received by eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, this must be because the bread and wine have become His flesh and His blood. This in turn depends on the powers attributed to the priesthood. Thus an essential part of this belief involves the attribution of almost magical powers to priests. The two questions cannot be separated. You cannot believe one without the other.

Question. According to the Book of Common Prayer, towards the end of the service of Holy Communion the words are uttered: "And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto Thee." These words are clearly founded on Romans 12: 1, but are such thoughts appropriate in the context of the Lord's Supper?

Answer. That we should do this thing, present our bodies living sacrifices is important beyond measure. Also, the meditations essential to the Lord's Supper rightly lead to such action, ideally once for all. We must think no thought, nor speak a word, which makes little of such a response. Nevertheless, Romans 12: 1 does not form part of the context of the Lord's Supper. To remember Him and show His death are in themselves so immense, that we do not need to confuse them by trying to include every other great truth or duty taught in Scripture. It must be conceded that the sacrifice

of *worship* is in the context of the Lord's Supper, by reason of the name "the cup of blessing," that is the cup wherein we bless the Father and the Son.

Question. It is clear in the Book of Common Prayer that the intention of the reformers was that normally a sermon should be preached during the service of Holy Communion. The ministry of the Sacrament, they say, should not be divorced from the ministry of the Word and Acts 20: 7 and 11 are quoted in support. In like manner I know that in some assemblies it is the practice to have a ministry meeting on Sunday morning at the conclusion of the meeting for breaking of bread. Would it be a good thing in our circle of meetings if longer ministry were more often given on Sunday mornings? I do not know the practice elsewhere, but certainly in our small meeting we very rarely have more than a 5 minute sermonette at the end of the morning meeting. Sometimes not even that.

Answer. The doctrine of the reformers (especially Calvin) on this subject was that Christ instituted an ordained ministry with two functions which no-one else can perform: (a) to administer the sacraments, and (b) to preach the Word. This is a further case in which we ought not to try to believe one without the other. The belief that these are the functions of an ordained ministry must involve the belief that Christ instituted an ordained ministry for this purpose. While Calvin, on any subject, makes a great point of the sole authority of Scripture, anyone can read in the Institutes how far he got from doing so. For instance, "the Lord commanded them to distribute the sacred symbols of His body and blood after His example

in Luke 22: 19." It is perfectly ludicrous to maintain that Luke 22: 19 proves that Christ instituted an ordained ministry to administer the sacraments. These views of Calvin are the real ground for the idea that normally a sermon should be preached *by an ordained minister who administers the sacraments*. Viewed in its integrity, the whole idea falls to the ground so far as Scripture is concerned.

It is indeed the responsibility of Christian ministers to "preach the word . . . in season, out of season" (2 Timothy 4: 2) and the urgent responsibility of all to take heed how they hear (Luke 8: 18). The examples of both Acts 20: 7 and 11 and 1 Corinthians 11 to 14 seems to indicate that when the Church was "come together in one place" there was freedom of ministry by the Spirit, and doubtless it should be so with us. But this is not bound in Scripture to the Lord's Supper.

Question. Is there any sense in which the Lord is "specially present" at meetings for the breaking of bread? And thus are we the losers if circumstances prevent us so gathering? This leads to a thorny problem. Is it ever permissible to join with other Christians who do not see eye to eye with us in partaking of the Lord's Supper? During the war, I remember the chaplain of the ship in which I was serving, a true man of God, invited me with other non-Anglicans to come to what he called the family meal. I did not accept; but I have wondered ever since if I did right.

Answer. (a) The very phrase "the presence of the Lord" causes us to pause and reflect. The thought is big with its effect on conscience and heart, on responsibility and immense privilege and blessing. Earlier ministry made much of it, and

rightly so. I believe that one has to put together several Scriptures to get their teaching on the presence of the Lord.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18: 20). At first sight this appears a very wide charter to claim the promise, but the context is indubitably the authority of the Church to bind and loose. Being gathered together in His name, therefore, is really a description of a Church. We have to go to 1 Corinthians 11 to 14 to learn the characteristics of gathering "in Church" (1 Corinthians 11: 18, 14: 19, 28, 35). Strictly, therefore, although the Lord's Supper is the characteristic gathering "in Church," any gathering which has the characteristics of 1 Corinthians 14 has the promise. It behoves us to make much in awe and wonder as well as in love and response, of the presence of the Lord at His Supper, but let us not attempt or presume to deny anyone who loves the Lord enough to want to claim His presence in the widest sense.

(b) Seeing eye to eye with us is a test that no-one could soberly wish to apply. A fundamental question is whether the occasion which presents itself is indeed the Lord's Supper or not. What invalidates the claim is treating it as a common meal and not "discerning the Lord's body." The test would be a very inclusive one. In the extreme, if the circumstances are so far removed from the Word of God as to involve a claim to the magical powers of a priesthood as mentioned above, and a conception of the Supper practically idolatrous, surely no instructed Christian would feel freedom to partake.

I feel sure that a basic principle must be the freedom of the individual, in working out his answer to

the Lord's authority and the guidance of His Spirit. Especially is this true in the particular circumstances of wartime, when under tremendous stress and test, mutual fellowship may have greatly strengthened faith and witness. You exercised your freedom to abstain and I would not regret it. Your witness to the principle of obedience to Scripture was doubtless needed.

Question. In 1 Corinthians 11: 26 we read "Ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." To whom do we show the Lord's death? To our fellowmen presumably, though they seldom see us doing it. But is it right for us to think also that we are displaying it to principalities and powers in heavenly places? And to God Himself, as we plead the Lord's death as our only ground of acceptance with Him, and as Reynold's hymn:

*His deep perfections gladly sing,
and tell them forth to Thee.*

Answer. In practically every case when this word is used in the

New Testament, it is clear that the announcement is made to someone. In Romans 1: 8 it is translated: "your faith is spoken of throughout the world." This presents the picture of circles throughout the world in which their faith was a subject of conversation, that is, the declaration was for the benefit of the persons present. I have seen it suggested that the idea of 1 Corinthians 11: 26 is that the Lord's death is "re-enacted", and without pushing the detail beyond what is moderate and natural, one can see that what He suffered is represented in the actions and elements of the Supper: the body broken, the blood poured out. Such a representation (or announcement) is clearly for the benefit of the persons present: they are the persons affected by this re-enactment. Further, the announcement could be said to be a public one, so long as it is known to take place, whether people see it or not. As secondary meanings, therefore, we ought not to exclude any of the interpretations mentioned.

ELIJAH AT HIS TRANSLATION

R. THOMSON

WE hear no more of Elisha after his anointing by Elijah, until we reach 2 Kings 2. There we read of the two men of God being together, and going from place to place in the light of Elijah's translation to heaven. Is Elisha a prepared vessel fully devoted to the things connected with the glory of God? Can he look beyond that which is of earth, and be diligent in the things in heaven? The course

of the service of Elijah is soon to be terminated in power and glory; and he is taking Elisha to spheres of great testing as they journey along.

It was when God would take up Elijah to heaven by a whirlwind, that the latter went with Elisha to Gilgal. Not Elisha going with Elijah, but Elijah going with Elisha. What greatness of humility! Gilgal was the place where circumcision had taken place in the days of Joshua.

The meaning of the word is "rolling," and it signifies the cutting off, or rolling away of the flesh. Self-judgment must be in evidence; and it was from Gilgal that Joshua and his armies went forth to victory. How very fitting it was that Elijah should bring his servant to this place, first of all.

However, the prophet must move along in his journey, and announces his intention of going to Bethel, but also gives Elisha the liberty to abide in Gilgal, if he so desires. The prompt reply is that he will go with his master, for his eyes are upon the heaven-bound man. So they went to Bethel, and are met by the sons of the prophets, who quickly inform Elisha that the Lord will take away his master from his head that day. Bethel, meaning "house of God," is the place where communion with God is known and enjoyed, with the revelation of divine secrets to faith. The sons of the prophets know much of what is to take place; but unlike Elisha, they do not pursue and see. However, there is one man who will not be turned aside; and we behold Elijah and Elisha going on together in spirit and communion to the city of Jericho.

This great place would remind us of the power to overcome the strongholds of the enemy, as in the days of Joshua; and that the fruits of victory must be dedicated to God. The failure to do this brought judgment upon Achan and his house, and defeat for the armies of Israel at Ai. Again the sons of the prophets speak to Elisha of the taking away of his master, for they seem to be in full knowledge of a great event, although not fully, and personally influenced by it. How very sad it is to see that many believers in our day and generation, knowing much concerning the coming of the

Lord and the rapture of the saints to glory, yet this precious truth has no vital power in their lives! Again, the determination of Elisha is declared, and the two went on together.

The next and last place is Jordan, the river of death and judgment. The ark of the covenant of the Lord had passed through it, dividing the waters in the time of Joshua, and the way was made through death typically, to the other side in resurrection. This is now typically secured for the believer in Christ, Who died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things have passed away: behold all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5: 17, N.T.).

In the sight of fifty sons of the prophets who stand to view afar off, the two men of God stand beside the river Jordan. Probably Elijah had fully realised that he must commit himself to death, in order to know the greatness of resurrection power. So, taking off his mantle, and wrapping it together, he smote the waters of Jordan which immediately became divided, thus enabling the two to cross on dry ground. The sons of the prophets, beholding at a distance, did not cross over, for in the experience of their souls they were not ready for this journey. One may personally realise that Christ died for me, (the Red Sea aspect of His death), and to have not attained to the experience that I have died with Christ, (the Jordan).

It is on the other side of Jordan where the very important question is put to Elisha: "Ask what I shall do for thee." Attracted by the noble, godly character of Elijah, he

asks for a double portion of his spirit. What a great and glorious request! This was only possible should he be diligent in one thing: "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." Thus they went on; and communing with each other, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, parting them both asunder. Elisha saw his master caught up to heaven in a whirlwind, and cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." He who had been truly weaned from his earthly father, in the days of the plough, now finds fulness of joy in heavenly things, and a new relationship.

Following this great event, there must be the proof and testimony of divine power in Elisha. Can he walk in the steps of Elijah, and prevail? Can he take up the mantle of Elijah, the instrument of power, and manifest the gift of gracious service here? Tested by Elijah, and the sons of the prophets, he is enabled to prevail, and can now be accounted worthy to be the prophet of God in the stead of Elijah. The

first step to be taken is to prove the power of God in the dividing of the waters of Jordan. So taking up the mantle of Elijah, he smote the river, crying out, "Where is the God of Elijah?" This is not a question of doubt, but a cry of victory in glorious testimony. The waters divide, and Elisha went over, trusting in the God of resurrection.

The sons of the prophets are quick to discern the spirit of Elijah in Elisha, but cannot fully realise that he had been translated to heaven. They think and reason in terms of earth regarding him and search the mountains for three days, but all to no avail. Elisha, in all the blessed secret of that heavenly scene to which Elijah had gone, besought them not to send in search, but they pay him no heed. Jericho and Bethel are next visited by Elisha, and from thence to Carmel, the place of fruit and victory. Finally, we see him in Samaria, the outside place, declaring the God of salvation, with the double portion of Elijah's spirit.

*"Jehovah Jesus, Name divine,
Rock of salvation, Thou art mine."*

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Philippians 1: 27, 2: 11

TO seize the bearing of the great mystery set out in chapter 2 we need to go back to 1: 27. In chapter 1 Paul has mentioned his thanksgiving, the present position, and his desires for the future concerning the work of the gospel and his relationships with the brethren both in Rome and Philippi concerning that work. This theme is sum-

med up in verse 27, with the exhortation that their conduct should be such as became the gospel. We should therefore pause and consider more closely what kind of conduct is suitable to the gospel. If a person is sincere in his engagement in gospel work, his conduct will be such as goes with the gospel. This will be true in many ways, but

only one is here selected to be urged on the Philippian saints. The gospel declares the kindness and love of God our Saviour. Its workers should therefore show kindness and love. In the gospel, the truth and righteousness of God are declared. Its workers should therefore be truthful and righteous. But these are not the elements of conduct here emphasized. The particular conduct here is urged on the brethren as becoming the gospel is "standing fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together in the same conflict with the gospel." "In the same conflict with" comes from the New Translation, but is almost identical with Lightfoot's paraphrase "fighting . . . on the side of the gospel." Conduct suitable to the gospel is then striving in *unity*.

The metaphor used at this point is a very frequent one in the New Testament, the metaphor of the fight, the battle, the war. The faith of the gospel is personified. It is spoken of as though it were a person engaged in a fight, and the saints are being urged to fight on its side. Here is the point at which we can take our start.

THE GOSPEL IS AT WAR,

and martial law is the order of the day: at war with sin, entrenched in various parts of the world in nationalism, communism and materialism. If this country were declared at war today, all our lives would be changed, because there is a conduct suitable to a people at war. The story of Uriah the Hittite provides a magnificent illustration of this. It was the season when Kings went out to war, and David was reclining at home. When he sent for Uriah, feasted him and then wished him to go home, Uriah replied, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in

tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and drink?" Wartime is no time for seeking ease and comfort as prime objectives; and above all *unity* is essential to a people at war.

At this moment missionaries in several parts of the world are in danger and uncertainty because of the gospel. They would not be there except for the gospel. The gospel is at war, and its workers are fighting for its life. Is this a time to be planning lives of self-seeking and ease? There is a time for rest in war; rest, refreshment and recreation are as necessary then as at any other time, but they must be such as serve, support and are consistent with the main end, which is war. The apostle is not pleading for lives in which refreshment and re-creation are absent, but lives in which they are not in the saddle. Whenever the Christian faces one of life's issues, marriage, a job, a home, let him seek help from God to settle it under this banner: seek ye first the kingdom of God.

In particular, wartime demands striving in rank and therefore in *unity*.

WAR DEMANDS UNITY

In Christian matters, nothing reveals our sincerity more than our attitude to Christian unity. There are the usual pitfalls on the right hand and on the left. On the terrible problem of unity in the wide sense including the whole Christian profession, the scandal of *disunity* is the saddest of all sad facts; and there is very little we can do about it. The need for Christian unity is a central subject of this epistle. It is in the most imposing setting; the need is the great fact that the gospel

is at war: the example is the greatest fact, that He who was in the form of God humbled Himself: but the occasion at Philippi was that two women fell out! This epistle therefore calls for a diversion of the beam of attention from disunity in the wider sense to what is, after all, the root of the matter, the need for a special supply of the grace of Christ to be at peace and in love with those in our own local gathering.

In 4: 2, 3 no details are given regarding the matter in dispute between Euodias and Syntyche. The first three converts, an Asiatic lady engaged in lucrative trade, a Greek slave-girl, devotee of a degrading shrine, and a Roman gaoler indicate that the differences in temperament and training which so easily lead to friction were present in full measure at Philippi. What is clear is that a definite act of reconciliation was the apostle's aim. Lightfoot's paraphrase makes this especially clear: "I appeal to Euodias and I appeal to Syntyche, to give up their differences and live at peace in the Lord. Yes, I ask you, my faithful and true yokefellow, to reconcile them again, for I cannot forget how zealously they seconded my efforts on behalf of the gospel." Euodias and Syntyche were worthy and commendable persons, but still subject to this particular need for correction.

As a general rule, in local assembly matters, we must never be satisfied with the existence of definite personal breaches. They grieve the Lord and are clean contrary to the express commands of Scripture and their correction is essential to progress in the gospel. They are often very difficult and intractable, are occasionally based on real issues, but there are always cancers and sores calling for the healing art. There are two distinct contributions

to settlement: one is the need for the persons themselves so to drink of the grace of Christ as to be ready to be reconciled and the other is the assistance which a third person can give in forwarding a reconciliation. Which is the action I can take?

This brings us to the truths introduced at the beginning of chapter 2. There is in the comfort of Christ and the fellowship of His Spirit that balm for wounded feelings which makes reconciliation possible. When this statement introduces in verse 2 the reiteration of the exhortation to be of one mind and one accord, the next great truth is brought in.

THE ROAD TO UNITY IS BY HUMILITY

Abandon, says Paul by the Spirit, strife and vainglory as motives for action and substitute lowliness of mind. In those two words, strife and vainglory, are pinpointed the pandemic impediments to charity. Strife betokens the exaltation of my party and vainglory the exaltation of myself. In the daily exercise of piety, by which motives are brought into the light of the cross of Christ, you will find these motives alive and active. Only when we "survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died, "can we recognise and abandon them, and substitute lowliness of mind.

This word lowliness or humility must be examined very closely. It represents the state of being a humbled person, and there is therefore something offensive to nature in the idea of humility. In pre-Christian Greek, it is used always with condemnation, conveying the idea of the grovelling or abject. In the New Testament it is everywhere represented as a central and essential Christian virtue, because it is the mind of Christ. Its setting here is the need for unity, but in its own

right it is central, because it is Christlike. Its meaning in practice is rendered definite by two maxims. (1) "Let each esteem others better than themselves." The meaning here is *above* themselves, *i.e.*, let each esteem all the other persons to be served. (2) "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." A paraphrase might read, Do not see only where your own interest lies, but see beyond, where the advantage of others lies.

It might be that Epaphroditus (vv. 24-30) was an example of the first maxim, and Timothy (vv. 19-23) of the second. It is necessary to note that to look on the brethren as persons to be served, does not mean to be controlled by their instructions. The word by which the New Testament describes our service to each other is "ministry." We are to be ministers who serve the true needs of men like those who minister to the sick or bring food to the table for their own guests. When you are sitting at table in your friend's house, your hostess may serve you at the table and indeed work her fingers to the bone to serve the saints. But it is not your place to give her orders. She is serving you, but *not* obeying you. She is serving the Lord and obeying Him. This is the *kind* of service we owe to our brethren, not serving at table; that is merely an illustration of service without accepting instructions from the person served. On the kind of service in which we owe obedience to the person served and accept his instructions, the truth is, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

Is the humility presented in the two maxims possible? It has been seen in superlative and perfect

measure in Christ Jesus, and so we come to one of the great disclosures of the New Testament in verses 5-8. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The final stage in the development of our theme is:

HUMILITY IS THE MIND OF CHRIST

This *mind* is a key thought, not only in the chapter but in the epistle. The word "mind" used in this way occurs in three groups (2: 2-4, 3: 15-19, 4: 2). See how from 2: 2 the idea dominates the passage: "be likeminded . . . of one mind." This "mind" is not the intelligent faculty, from which arises differences of thought and judgment. The mind of Philippians 2 is something which promotes unity in spite of divergences of judgment and views of truth. It is the lowly, humble mind, the mind which sees our brethren as persons to be served for Christ's sake, the mind which takes account of the advantage and interest of others, the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

The direct purpose of this momentous passage is to present the mind which was in the Man Christ Jesus as an example and urge toward the production of the same mind in us. As in so many other Scriptures there is the disclosure of the most profound truths to serve a directly practical purpose. For our worshipping, adoring recognition of the essential deity of Christ and the true nature of the incarnation, this passage is pre-eminent in Paul's writings, but at this moment we are considering its direct bearing on Christian behaviour, that is, to produce humility in us.

Two actions of our Lord are here

presented, running exactly parallel with each other:

}	Being	in the form of
	Being found	in fashion as
	a man	He humbled Himself.
	God	He emptied Himself.

In the former of these actions, which is the unthinkable down-stooping of the incarnation, we cannot act as He did. His action is not an example we can imitate. What then is its purpose in this place? It contrasts the *mind* of Christ with Adam and Eve. When the serpent proposed to Eve, "Ye shall be as God" they snatched at such a prospect, though it involved direct disobedience to God: and this was their fall. We learn here the fundamental contrast between Adam, our father and Christ our Saviour. Adam, being found a man, snatched at equality with God, became disobedient and therefore died because of his disobedience. Christ Jesus, existing, as to His original being, in the form of God, emptied Himself; and being found a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient and therefore died because of His obedience. Therefore God has exalted Him high over all.

Also, however, regarding the first of these actions, (that He emptied Himself) there is presented the original rank of the One who was found in fashion as a Man. A saint of any age, in an unworthy moment, might say, "it is more difficult for me to be humble because of my exalted rank." The Man who is here our example, was in His illustrious rank unimaginably exalted above all mankind. His original rank was, and is, deity. He was and is God — one with the Father. Such is the Being, being found in fashion as a Man, who is our

example. He humbled Himself.

Moreover, one of the consequences attendant on His down-stooping was His taking servant form. We *are* in servant form: and to accept that place, as He took that place, and hence to look on the brethren as persons to be served, is near to the heart of humility. Thus, in His second action, He humbled Himself. He is directly our example, to walk as He walked, and only in His presence will strife and vain-glory vanish away. "Do we not see these two things exemplified in the disciples of the Lord, in the incident recorded in Mark 10? The Lord was journeying to the cross, and coming to Capernaum, and "being in the house," He asked them, "What was it that you disputed by the way?" Immediately we read, "They held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." Should we be far wrong in saying that the real root of all strife and division among the people of God is that someone wanted to be great? We, of course, can find other reasons, but is this not the primary cause of all division? It is only a little while and we shall all reach home. And when we are home — "in the house" — will not the Lord call us together and say to us, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" And in His presence, like the disciples, we shall be silent with shame. Alas! we can dispute among ourselves "by the way," in the presence of one another; but, in the presence of the Lord we are silent. The fact that we have so often disputed among ourselves, only proves how little we have walked in the presence of the Lord."*

* Hamilton Smith, *The Epistle of Christ*, pp. 52, 53.

RECONCILIATION

J. STODDART

HERE is a great New Testament word which merits more consideration than it generally receives. It is all too possible to wrap up Scripture truths in neat packages to be conveniently carried in our minds and easily unwrapped when required. But if our hearts and lives and ways are to be affected the challenge of the truth we hold must ever be renewed. Thus every truth must be constantly under prayerful review lest its edge be dulled by our very familiarity with it.

So may we consider afresh the meaning and implications of the subject of Reconciliation, a theme surely none too prominent in present-day thinking. The very first banal effect of man's original sin was to produce estrangement between him and his beneficent Creator, so that when the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, the hitherto sweet communion between them became impossible. Hearing His voice, the guilty pair "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." Since then, despite the tender mercy and longsuffering of God, man has remained a fugitive in hiding from his Creator, estranged and "alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4: 18). But reconciliation, the abolition of this distance, was ever in God's mind for His lost and hostile creature, and in many ways this was typified in the Old Testament. It is, however, in the New Testament that His great plan comes to light, and in the coming of His Son into the world began the mighty act by which He would eventually close the gap made by sin between man and Himself. Indeed, this plan determined, in the ultimate, to re-

concile everything in earth and heaven to Himself (Colossians 1: 20). Thus we see God Himself taking the initiative (as He did when He called to Adam, "Where art thou?") coming incarnate into the estranged world. "And the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not."

But the hiding of man from the One who made him could not obscure the purpose of God's love in Jesus, and through the world He goes presenting to men in grace "the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person." For here, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5: 19). Unprecedented works of power and gracious words never before heard now gave all who had eyes to see and ears to hear the clearest demonstration that God in very truth was with men, not to condemn but to save, not to repel but to reconcile. Did then this gracious approach result in a universal acclamation by the world of its restored friendship? Full well we know the sad history that attests the contrary; for all too soon the voice was raised, when the Son was seen, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him." Seemingly provoked and enraged by His grace, their verdict was unanimous, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him," and this they did. And the world's verdict might well have sealed its eternal doom, for surely nothing more clearly and finally pronounced man's love of estrangement from God than the Cross of Christ.

How could reconciliation now be effected, if the Reconciler Himself were dead? Here we come to the

insuperable wisdom and love of God, in that the Cross itself becomes the very basis and instrument of reconciliation as conceived in the mind of God. How profoundly wonderful this is, that man's most dastardly crime becomes the new starting point for the negotiations of God's reconciling love! To quote Erich Sauer in his book, *The Triumph of the Crucified*, "He has turned this devilishly mean rebellion against His Person into the atonement for the salvation of these rebels! He has answered this blow on His holy face with the kiss of reconciling love! We wrought the extreme of wickedness against Him, but He has wrought the extreme of goodness toward us, and both at the same hour." Such indeed is the mystery and might of Divine Love, in that, "for our sake He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5: 21, R.S.V.). Thus and thus alone has every possible cause of estrangement and enmity been righteously removed forever, and nearness to God established on an entirely new footing.

Having thought a little about the need for reconciliation on man's side and the effective basis of it from God's side, let us now see the present relevance of all this in our contemporary world. With Christ risen and ascended and the Holy Spirit now in the world God continues to work in reconciling grace, giving to His servants the ministry or service of reconciliation referred to in 2 Corinthians 5: 18. Clearly this began with the apostolic labours of the early Church, resulting in thousands of souls being brought out of darkness into His marvellous light, from estrangement and distance into the nearness

of the Father's embrace (Luke 15: 20). How good it must have been to hear the Apostle Paul with ambassadorial dignity proclaiming his charter of reconciliation as contained in 2 Corinthians 5: 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Words with such appeal to men surely come right from the heart of God. And many are those who have responded to them in simple faith and have thus been personally reconciled to God.

Was it not in regard to this very service that the apostle in 2 Corinthians 5 speaks of the motives which governed them? "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord (that is, for the unbeliever) we persuade men." This galvanised Paul into action, for instance, at Athens where we read in Acts 17 that his spirit was stirred within him when he saw that city of intellectual giants dominated by the worship of dumb idols. Their confessed ignorance of "The Unknown God" challenged his involvement in the service of reconciliation, for here was the *cri de cœur* for the message he bore. So at the court of Areopagus he presents to them a reconciling God, "preaching to them Jesus and the resurrection," but solemnly reminding them of the coming day of judgment with all its terror for the Christ rejector. But he tells us of another powerful motive which impelled such service — the constraint of the love of Christ. Pure Calvary love was at the very centre of all his thinking, saturating his soul with the consuming conclusion that "if One died for all, then were all dead." What divine compulsion there was in that motive! How desperately men needed to be made anew in Christ

and brought near to God in Him and to live for Him Who died for them and rose again.

Here then is the vision which motivates all true service of reconciliation in the day of Christ's absence, the present day of reconciling grace. The apostles with their immense initial labours have gone, but surely both the motives which actuated them and the needs of men which called for their service are with us today. God has certainly not ceased reconciling the world to Himself (as He was doing in Christ), and reconciliation is still His attitude to all men everywhere. It may be contended, however, that the apostles alone were God's ambassadors in the full authority of that position. Doubtless in a very special sense they were commissioned to herald the word of reconciliation, the original certified text of the message, as it were. But the truest Ambassador for God in this world remains to indwell and empower every servant of Christ today, the Holy Spirit Himself. He it is Who by His very presence here "brings demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The withdrawal of an ambassador in international affairs is usually the indication that diplomatic relations between the two countries involved have terminated. Would we be justified in thinking that God, by removing the apostles, has terminated His appeal to men to be reconciled to Him, to be at peace with Him? The facts of the situation today emphasise the reverse, for the Gospel is being preached in the Spirit's power in more lands and languages than ever hitherto. Men are being "reconciled to God through the death of His Son," in the ever-increasing spread of His Word, if not through apostolic ambassadors any longer,

then through those who can be described as "workers together" or "fellow-workers" (2 Corinthians 6: 1) in the same character.

What impetus it would give, what character it would lend to Gospel activity, to Sunday School work and every other evangelistic effort, to regard ourselves as those who represent a reconciling God in this world, "as though God did beseech by us, praying men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." There is a tendency in some quarters to demean Gospel service as of secondary importance, but if God confers upon it the status of ambassadorial business then in His mind it is important if not in ours. In such a case our thinking needs some adjustment to know the joy that fills Heaven in the recovery of even a single soul (Luke 15), a joy that is shared by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is essential that an ambassador should truly represent the country and government he serves, maintaining only its interests while for the time being he is domiciled in scenes far from his homeland. He must never act on his own behalf. Is this patently true of our service today? Or are we disunited and at variance with others in a way that seems to make the message of reconciliation sound hollow and unconvincing? How often this has been levelled at the Christian worker by those he seeks to win! If a foreign embassy in this country were known to have unreconciled differences within itself little respect would be paid to its voice or its authority. What harmful impressions of its home country would be created too. But, says Paul, "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." Nevertheless, the expression "workers together" implies unity among those

who present the message of reconciliation, and without such unity the appeal becomes enfeebled. How much victory have we given to the enemy through disregard of the instruction in Philippians 1: 27 to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel". The disagreement between two godly sisters, Euodias and Syntyche, was a dangerous threat to the effectiveness of the Gospel testimony in Philippi. Their reconciliation was an urgent necessity, therefore, if the message of reconciliation was not to be discredited and dishonoured in the world. Here, as in every other service, it is essential to "use diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace."

Finally, let us consider the character and urgency of the ambassadorial message of reconciliation. It is first and foremost a gracious communication in which the voice of God is heard. "For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." How deeply touching is God's concern that men should be reconciled to Him and saved, and to this end He would have His Own voice heard in the sinner's ear. So that the sweet message, the glad tidings, should carry His fullest authority. But there is also the solemn tone of

urgency in the tender appeal, for He says, "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6: 2). Can the present work of reconciliation be allowed to lapse and languish when the divine appeal is couched in terms so urgent as this? The effect of so potent a message on the one who bears it can be measured by the apostle's words in Colossians 1: 28. These are paraphrased in J. B. Phillips' *Letters to Young Churches* in this way: "So, we proclaim Christ! We warn everyone we meet, and teach everyone we can, all that we know about Him; so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ. This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me."

Discouragement, doubtless, abounds in every Gospel effort and indifference to the appeal mounts to appalling proportions, but let us be diligent, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2: 11). Reconciling men to God is the battle in which Satan fears (and rightly so) his greatest defeat. Every reconciled soul is a substantial loss to him. Let us each in our own sphere humbly seek, therefore, to press the message of reconciliation relentlessly upon all men everywhere.

THE UNCHANGING CHRIST

BERNARD A. LILLEY

IT is evident even to the most casual observer of events that the present century has seen a tremendous change in almost every aspect of human activity. Man's scientific discoveries and the technological developments based upon

them have almost completely revolutionised the surroundings in which he lives. Who, at the turn of the century, would have contemplated seriously the prospect of sending a man to the moon? Ease of communication has meant an effective

contraction of the globe on which we live and we are, in many ways, so much more involved than our forbears with the turmoil and trouble that is on every hand. The changing world around us indicates man's desire to free himself from some of the restraints of days gone by. There is a questioning of the validity of the old relationships and beliefs and the "wind of change" has blown itself into a virtual hurricane.

It must be recognised that God has placed us in this changing world. There will be no attempt here to assess the character of the changes taking place, whether they are for better or for worse. The pattern is so complex and it can be extremely dangerous to attempt to make sweeping generalisations. Rather will an attempt be made to draw attention to what is unchangeable as the Christian revelation makes it known to us. In so doing it is well to distinguish between man's work and God's work. Man's building must be done on a foundation which changes, of necessity, as the years proceed. More becomes known and he often has to learn in hard and sometimes bitter experience that his basic assumptions need modification. Let us recognise the process for what it is, with its remarkable success at times, but with its evident limitations. God's building, on the other hand, has permanence, the foundation being the unchangeability of Christ and of His work at the cross of Calvary. Here there is no need for modification as the years go by. Let us also recognise this situation. God's foundation will never be eroded, and thoughtful, reverent enquiry into His building upon it only confirms the enquirer in his wonder at it all. All that the Christian holds dear depends upon this. His circumstances may and do

change, but he has this security amidst them all, that the basis of God's dealing with him in grace is eternal and unchangeable. For him different circumstances but give fresh ways of learning the love and care of Him who is known as Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE UNCHANGEABLE PERSON OF CHRIST

Scripture gives to us abundant assurance concerning the unchangeable character of God, and of the Christ who has revealed Him. In the comparative shadow of the Old Testament revelation He could declare, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3: 6). In the full blaze of the New Testament revelation of God in Christ it can be made known that the Christ whom we have come to know is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13: 8). He Himself could claim to be the "I am" (John 8: 58), a title in which His unchangeability is implicit. The one who "was in the beginning with God" (John 1: 2) is the one who was known and accepted by those few disciples during His life time here on earth. He is the one who died on Calvary's cross and rose again; the one who ascended and concerning whom the angelic message was given, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 11). In early apostolic times Peter preached in all the vigour of his own inimitable style of this "same Jesus" whom "God hath made . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36) consequent upon His glorious victory on the cross. Concerning Him it can be stated, when the heavens and the earth have served their purpose and have been set aside, that "thou art the same,

and thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1: 12). Our experience is with such a one. Whether we look into the past, at the present, or into the future, there never has been or ever will be a time when He will be false to anything that we have learned about Him through grace.

THE UNCHANGEABLE LOVE OF CHRIST

Christians down the centuries have rejoiced to sing of the unchanging love of Christ. Thoughts of it have been a great comfort to many in the most difficult circumstances through which men have ever been called to pass. They are not, however, merely the experience of many Christians, wonderful though this is. The Scriptures testify abundantly to this unchanging love, so that we might understand that it does not depend on our feelings or response to it. The clear statements that the Scriptures contain on this matter are intended to make us realise this, and the result is a deeper, more adequate response to it for "we love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4: 19). Christ's love is sovereign and He has seen fit to set it upon us in the first place, acting independently of any merit on our part because it was certainly not deserved by us.

Scripture speaks of this love from the very earliest time; even before the earth was created Christ's "delights with the sons of men" were foreshadowed (Proverbs 8: 31). This love was set upon Israel, concerning whom the Lord said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 3: 8). Israel did not deserve it; the Lord set His love upon them because He desired to do it (Deuteronomy 7: 7, 8). The same is true for the Christian for whom the love of God has been

shown in Christ "even when we were dead in sins" (Ephesians 2: 4, 5). The love of Christ is seen in its depth and fullness at the cross. On the threshold of that great event it is recorded that Jesus, knowing exactly the course of events about to take place, and "having loved His own, . . . loved them unto the end" (John 13: 1). How fitting it is that the eternal song of the redeemed will be "unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1: 5). Scripture is full of such references to the love of Christ and its unchangeability and those given here are merely chosen to indicate its mighty span, through the whole revelation of God from first to last.

THE UNCHANGEABLE WORK OF CHRIST

If the love of God in Christ is the motive for His dealings with us in grace, then the work of Christ is the basis. God's love is no mere sentimental forgetfulness of all the problems that His righteousness must face. God's heart of love and the satisfaction of His righteous demands against us can be declared at one and the same time: we see this, first and foremost, in Christ's death upon the cross. God can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3: 26).

It is important to recognise the finality of the work of Christ. He Himself proclaimed from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19: 30), and God has given evidence of His satisfaction in the work. The resurrection is meant, amongst other things, to indicate to us the unequivocal acceptance by God of the work of redemption. When the believing Hebrews had to be reassured concerning their new-found faith in Christ, comparison was made between the old system they must

have known since childhood and the new one just recently embraced. The new is secured in Christ whose work needs no repetition; "He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9: 12); "once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9: 26); "this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10: 12); "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10: 14). The solidity of the substance stands out in all its grandeur as it is compared with the foreshadowing of Old Testament imagery. The new believers can be encouraged to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10: 22).

Not only is the work of Christ upon the cross of eternal value, but His present activity is on behalf of the believer. "He continueth ever" and "hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Hebrews 7: 24). The Israelite in days gone by suffered a change in the priesthood from time to time; the old priest who understood him and his problems died and he had to become acquainted with the new one. But now the Christ he has come to know is always there and can always understand and sympathise. The passing of the years makes not the slightest difference as far as Christ is concerned, and only an increased awareness of His sufficiency as far as the believer in Him is concerned.

THE UNCHANGEABLE POSITION OF THE BELIEVER

If we are prepared to accept the testimony of Scripture concerning the unchangeability of Christ and of His love and work, then the unchangeable position of the believer

in Him follows directly. The believer's security is eternal because it is based on these truths. If the work of Christ could be proved to be invalid or insufficient then the cause is lost. If Christ be not raised we have no proof of God's acceptance of this work, our faith is an empty thing, and we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15: 17). But the work of Christ is sufficient, and He has been raised from the dead. Our faith in Him is not an empty thing, but full of meaning. It gives us the ability to grasp the import of God's activity on our account so that we might clearly understand that our whole future depends on and is secured by what God Himself regards as unshakeable. Everything that we have as Christians is ours "in Christ" (Ephesians 2: 6, 13) and is, therefore, unchangeable as He is. Moreover it was His expressed desire to have us with Him where He is (John 17: 24), and God's actions have produced the wondrous certainty of the positive fulfilment of this request.

Many, if not all, Christians go through times of perplexity and doubt. This often leads to uncertainty about the goodness of God and the security of salvation. Surely this is the reason the Scripture has made the truths before us so abundantly plain. Our circumstances do change and our feelings fluctuate; perhaps the chief differences between Christians is merely in the magnitude of the fluctuation. J. N. Darby wrote, when meditating on the love of Christ, words which have been such an encouragement to so many:

*"No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind.
And yet Thy love's unchanging,
And doth recall my heart
To joy in all its brightness,
The peace its beams impart."*

C. Wesley, likewise, wrote of the one whose love was his all sufficiency:

*"Thou hidden Source of calm
repose!
Thou all-sufficient Love divine!
Secure we are, for we are Thine."*

How reassuring it is to sit down soberly and take stock of all that God has said. We rest on what God Himself has done in Christ and recognise that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8: 28).

PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

It might be argued that if everything depends on the work of Christ then nothing depends on us. In one sense this is absolutely correct reasoning, but so often those who advance this argument forget that there are very practical consequences. Let it be granted that "we are His workmanship", but let us remember also that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto

good works" (Ephesians 2: 10). The Scripture are full of exhortations consequent upon our acceptance of the truth concerning what God has done for us. The epistle to the Ephesians, which speaks of some of the heights of the Christian calling as established through Christ by God Himself, also exhorts us to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called" (Ephesians 4: 1).

Having recognised, therefore, that Christian activity is expected to follow from an understanding of the truths that have been before us, let us be reassured in all we seek to do in the service of Christ, "always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15: 58). We have presented to us a solid basis on which to live and, if need be, to die in the service of Christ. He Himself said to His disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28: 20).

WALKING WITH GOD

T. S. DAVISON

ONLY two men, Enoch the seventh from Adam, and his great-grandson Noah, are specifically stated in Scripture to have "walked with God"; but it would be wholly unjustifiable to conclude, therefore, that this experience was confined to them alone. It is twice recorded that Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5: 22, 24), and this, together with the kindred statement regarding Noah (Genesis 6: 9) constitutes a three-fold witness, not only to the actual facts, but to the possibility of similar experiences in the lives of others. In view of the testimony of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, it is certain that there have been many

saints of God in all dispensations who, in their measure, have walked with God: and if this was possible in former ages when the revelation of God was incomplete, how much more in this day, when God has spoken His final word to men in His Son (Hebrews 1: 1).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Before proceeding to a detailed consideration of the Genesis record concerning Enoch and Noah, it is desirable that we should have some understanding of what is involved in the expression "walking with God". Long after the days of these two patriarchs, the Lord said to Abraham, "I am Almighty God; walk

before Me and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17: 1). Walking *before* God has reference to the responsible pathway, trodden consciously under the eye of God, in active obedience to His revealed will. This is analogous to what is spoken of in the New Testament as "walking in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9: 31) or, serving God "with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12: 28). For saints to walk before God in this sense has been pleasing to God in all ages; the perfect example being the unique earthly pathway of the Lord Jesus Christ — perfect Man, perfect Servant, yet God manifest in the flesh.

But when we consider the meaning of the words "walking *with* God" it is not difficult to apprehend that we are on different, if not higher ground. Communion, companionship, intimacy, and moral compatibility, are some of the things inseparable from this wondrous conception. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" asked the prophet Amos (Amos 3: 3). This suggests that one pre-requisite for walking with God is moral compatibility, involving purity of conscience before Him. The holy intimacy which characterises such a walk is well illustrated by Abraham in his pleading with the Lord on behalf of guilty Sodom (Genesis 18), and is one of his distinctions in Scripture that he is called the friend of God (James 2: 23). Moses is also an outstanding example of this characteristic intimacy with God, for it is recorded that "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend" (Exodus 33: 11).

It is clear, therefore, that walking with God in any dispensation involves step by step and moment by moment communion with God, in the light of whatever revelation of

Himself He has been pleased to give for the time being. In the present day this latter is, of course, the full and final revelation of God as Father in the person of the Incarnate Son.

ENOCH

Reverting to what is written of Enoch in Genesis 5, the Spirit of God seems to draw special attention to the length of time during which he walked with God, *i.e.*, three hundred years. It is true that human life extended, in the period up to the flood, to seven, eight, or even nine hundred or more years. Nevertheless, when compared with the normal span of man's life — three score years and ten — as stated by Moses the man of God in his prayer (Psalm 90: 10), three hundred years is a period of extraordinary length. The steadfastness of Enoch's walk with God during these three centuries is enhanced in our minds when we consider the prevailing world conditions as disclosed in the epistle of Jude verses 14, 15. It is apparent that he lived amidst almost universal ungodliness, and he was, indeed, the mouthpiece of the Spirit of God in prophesying the coming of the Lord with ten thousands of his Saints to execute judgment on a world of ungodly sinners. This prophecy was partially fulfilled when the flood in the days of Noah destroyed all life on the earth except that preserved in the ark; but awaits final fulfilment at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the attendant armies of heaven, for the destruction of the Beast, the false Prophet, the kings of the earth and their armies, as described in Revelation 19: 11-21.

With regard to the flood, it is interesting to note that this came in the same year in which Enoch's son Methuselah (whose name means "when he is dead it shall come") died at the age of nine hundred and

sixtynine years — the longest span of human life recorded in Scripture. This latter striking fact is a beautiful illustration of “the longsuffering of God which waited in the days of Noah” spoken of by the apostle Peter (1 Peter 3: 20). It also indicates that Enoch, the man who walked with God, in giving this name to his son, was in the secret of the mind of God as to the coming judgment. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,” said the Psalmist (Psalm 25: 14), and this has been verified in the experience of innumerable saints from Enoch’s day to the present.

NOAH

Enoch had walked with God in the midst of an ungodly world, and Noah did likewise in a world which had ripened for the judgment of God. The imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually, and the world was filled with violence and corruption. God communicated His thoughts to this solitary saint who walked with Him, and had found grace in His sight. So we read that Noah, “being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11: 7).

Enoch in his day had witnessed to his contemporaries of coming judgment; now Noah became, during the 120 years in which he was engaged in building the ark, a “preacher of righteousness”, doubtless by his actions as well as by word of mouth. His preaching was in vain so far as the corrupt world system was concerned, for when the moment arrived when the righteous judgment of God could no longer be restrained, only he and his house

were saved, in the ark, from the flood which came on the “world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2: 5).

THE PERFECT EXAMPLE

Brief allusion has already been made to the perfection of the walk *before* God of the man Christ Jesus. We must now consider His walk *with* God as revealed to our worshipping hearts in the Gospels. Enoch, Noah, and all others, must fade into comparative insignificance as we thus behold Him. Let four citations relating to widely separated periods of His life be taken as illustrative of what continuously characterised Him during the whole of His earthly pathway.

Luke gives us a brief but satisfying glimpse of His early history during the “hidden years” when, as a boy of 12 years of age, we hear Him saying to His mother and to Joseph, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2: 49). Even at that tender age, the compelling sense of the great purpose of His incarnation revealed in these words betokened that perfect communion with the Father which continued without interruption to the end of His sojourn in this world.

Again, at the tomb of Lazarus, before manifesting the glory of God, and His own personal glory as the Son of God, in His authority over the hitherto invincible power of death and corruption, He lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 11: 41-42). Here, that communion with the Father which was habitual with Him became audible for the moment, to the ears of men.

Furthermore, as His pathway neared its closing moments, He said

to His loved disciples, "The hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John 16: 32). "And so they went both of them together" (Genesis 22: 6, 8).

Finally, having glorified His Father on the earth, and finished the work given Him to do, He commended His Spirit to Him and expired — the perfect termination of a lifelong walk with God.

CAN WE WALK WITH GOD TODAY ?

Having thus briefly considered the examples of two outstanding men of the Old Testament, and the perfect example of the man Christ Jesus, the question may be raised, what of us, "upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10: 11, N.T.)?

The moral depravity of the antediluvian world is apparent from the words of the Lord regarding it — "the end of all flesh is come before Me" (Genesis 6: 13), but the decisive moment for the world (so far as its responsibility is concerned) came when it rejected and crucified the Son of God. It then deliberately and finally took sides against God, being completely deluded by Satan. This critical moment was referred to by the Lord Jesus in the solemn words "Now is the judgment (crisis) of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12: 31). The world of the twentieth century A.D. is morally no different from that which so emphatically showed its enmity against God. The verdict given at Calvary has never been reversed, or even modified. Can the believer passing through such a world walk with God? Certainly not in any power attached to the old Adam life, but only in the power of His life who said, "I have overcome

the world" (John 16: 33). The simplest believer is entitled to know by faith that life as his own, and moreover, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit who is the power by which that life is made effectual in action. (See Colossians 3: 4; Galatians 2: 20; Romans 8: 2.)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, three things may briefly be indicated which, amongst others, will characterise one who walks with God today.

1. Such an one walks by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5: 7). The life of faith, incomprehensible to the man of the world, has been the life of the saints of God from Abel onward. It has *always* been true that "the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2: 4).

2. Such an one will walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5: 16), and will be led by the Spirit (verse 18). Every believer is indwelt by the Spirit, and when the Spirit is ungrieved, He is the power of all true worship, service, and communion.

3. Following upon this, one who walks with God will walk in love (Ephesians 5: 2) for the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Romans 5: 5).

The beautiful moral graces displayed in such a life and walk are set forth in detail in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8, and were seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly pathway. As the believer is enabled, through grace, to walk with God, these same moral beauties will be seen in increasing measure in him (or her), through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit. The nearer to the Lord such an one is thus enabled to walk, the greater, doubtless, will be the sense of shortcoming and failure, in the light of His presence; but the greater also, on the other

hand, the appreciation of the love and grace which continues to encourage and draw out the heart's affections and desires, to "follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6: 3; Philippians 3: 10).

May our Lord Himself encourage all our hearts to an ever deepening desire to walk with Him; to faith-

fully witness to Him in a hostile world; whilst we wait for His promised coming again, when, the sleeping saints having been raised, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4: 17).

FAITH — DEPENDENT YET DISTINCT

COLIN CURRY

Mark 2: 1-12; John 4: 39-42; 2 Timothy 1: 5-12

THAT the faith of one individual can be stimulated and helped by that of others is almost self-evident. Few, on consideration, would deny that they owe a great deal to the example and helpfulness of other believers. This is no doubt an important part of the means used of God for our progress in the Christian life, and often even for our initial entry into it on conversion. Fellowship and mutual faith of believers, and joint activities arising from such a living faith, are matters to which Scripture attaches great importance. To follow the faith of others, insofar as it is directed toward the one great Object of Christian faith, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever", is recommended in Scripture (Hebrews 13: 7, 8); our aim should be to value and participate in such opportunities increasingly.

On the other hand, it must be agreed that there can be no substitute for one's own faith. There is a real need for an independent and characteristic faith, a faith which is distinct from that of others in its own personal confidence and response to Christ; a faith which could stand alone, if need be, which can and will withstand discouragements,

and which in itself, by its clearness and reality, can be a great help to others. "Be thou an example . . . in faith . . ." (1 Timothy 4: 12). The need for leaders, as well as followers, is great today.

THE PARALYTIC, AND HIS FOUR FRIENDS

The story of the paralysed man, brought to Jesus by his four friends, supplies our first example on this theme. In the early stages of the story a helpless man, dependent entirely on the initiative of others, at the end he stands on his own feet, and acts in sole response to the voice of Christ. In himself he becomes the demonstration of Christ's power and authority, and the onlookers are amazed. At the opening of the story the vitality of the faith of the man's four friends is the outstanding feature, contrasting remarkably with his own powerlessness. He was carried by them completely; but their faith in Christ made them interested, active, persistent in bringing him to Christ, and confident as to the outcome. The Lord took full note of this faith, honouring it openly to the confusion of the unbelieving element in the crowd. His answer to the faith of the four men exceeded their

expectations, meeting first the man's deeper need, which was not what was first in their thoughts. The physical cure was made to be the proof of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to do far greater things, to show His "power on earth to forgive sins", and to silence completely the criticism of His opponents.

To whom did this impotent man owe his cure? Undoubtedly in the basic sense it was to Christ alone. He heard His voice and obeyed, and in that word lay the power to make him rise and walk, and in that obedience was his own personal response to Christ. Yet, in another sense, his friends made an essential contribution, for which he had much reason to be grateful. There is no real contradiction here. Their faith was part of the means of the man's cure, but that too had its source in Christ. Without that Object for their faith they could, at most, have shown sympathy for their friend, but with it their aims to help him were amply fulfilled.

Where, it may be asked, do we find ourselves in this story? Perhaps not amongst the throng in its unbelief and criticism of Christ. But perhaps more passive than active in our response to Christ? Thankful we ought to be for all who have a clearer view of Christ than ourselves, and whom we may be glad to follow and depend on to some extent. But to rise and walk at His bidding, in the strength that is drawn from an immediate and continued experience with Him, is the greater need.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA, AND HER FELLOW-SAMARITANS

The second passage underlines the lesson already drawn from the first. There is perhaps no clearer example than that of the Samaritan woman of the meeting of a lone individual with the Lord. Yet, through that

meeting, a whole city was introduced to Christ; many afterwards heard Him and knew Him in a personal way, and were careful to affirm that there was nothing of a second-hand kind about their faith.

The disciples had gone into the city, and He waited for her alone. She came, unaware that He was there, with no help or encouragement from others, alone and probably miserable at heart. It was a surprise that He spoke to her at all, but what He said was still more surprising. He spoke of God's great readiness to give, freely and in abundance, all that would satisfy a heart such as hers. He did not overlook her sin, but gently showed her that He knew all, so that she felt the shame of it without a word of condemnation from Him. Yet, even so, He spoke of the "living water" available from Himself, and of His readiness to give it; He spoke too of the continuing thirst of all who seek their satisfaction elsewhere. She asked for that gift, and obtained it, receiving at the same time an awakening awareness of His greatness. The sad and solitary woman, helpless in her sin, was quickened into life and joyful activity, and became the effective means of spreading the joy of the knowledge of Himself to her fellow-Samaritans.

Much else immediately followed. An opportunity was brought to many of the Samaritans, which could not otherwise have existed. Her spontaneous and real testimony impressed many, and led them to the same faith in Christ as she possessed. At the close of His stay some, however, expressed themselves to the woman in the following terms, "We believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." That she had introduced

Him to Samaria, they would agree with gratitude. Yet such was the knowledge that they now possessed, that they looked beyond the chain of events that had brought it about, to the One Who was the source of all they had received; they rejoiced and wondered in their first-hand knowledge of Himself.

PAUL AND TIMOTHY

That the present subject does not lose its importance even for mature Christians, is made plain by this third illustration bearing on the same theme. Timothy, when Paul's second letter was written to him, was no novice in the Christian life. Many years of real devotion to the Lord, sometimes accompanying and assisting Paul on long journeys and over extended periods, at other times doing separate, valuable and reliable service elsewhere, all this lay behind him when this letter was written. Paul has no doubt as to the reality of his faith; he describes it as "unfeigned faith". He remembers with gratitude Timothy's great advantages in this respect. His mother and his grandmother had possessed this faith before him. From a child he had known the Holy Scriptures. All this had been great gain to him, and it is not minimized or discounted in any way. His faith was in the family, yet it was his own distinctive faith, as had been shown on many a past occasion.

Yet, as Paul writes this letter, the discouragements to his own faith, and to Timothy's, were real; there was need, perhaps greater than ever before, for a bold and single-minded faith, and Paul does not hesitate to press this. He gives him a wonderful example of it in his own attitude too. "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power,

and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner;" "I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed." Discouraging situations test faith, but they also provide its opportunity. Paul himself might well have been discouraged. To outward appearance much seemed to be amiss; all in Asia had turned away, he was imprisoned without prospect of release; martyrdom was near. Timothy's position was at least a relatively favourable one, though there was much connected with the interests of Christ which he shared with Paul, causing them both a good deal of disquiet. The life of faith was indeed proving to be a battle. It was a real thing to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2: 3). Yet Paul, who at the time carried the major share of this, provides the example and the stimulus for this to Timothy. "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." This is his confident reply to discouragement.

At the time of writing Christian companionship for Paul was very limited. "Only Luke is with me" (2 Timothy 4: 11). Only recently he had, at one time, and in a difficult moment, stood alone for Christ. "No man stood with me, but all forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear" (2 Timothy 4: 16, 17). Timothy, on the other hand, is assured that there will be others to share the burden, and to whom he must pass on what had been committed to him (2 Timothy 2: 2). There were to be others "that call on the name of the Lord

out a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2: 22), with whom he could follow Christ. We may surely be thankful that we too, in our day, are not bereft of the support that comes from fellowship with others of a like mind. It may not be amiss, none the less, to challenge ourselves about this.

While thankful for all the aids to our faith, and benefiting greatly from them, can we see past them to Christ? Is Paul's Christ ours in such a way that we too can say, and in the same spirit, "I know Whom I have believed?"

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS

J. S. BLACKBURN

5. THE APOSTLE'S PRAYERS

"YE sought for David in times past to be king over you," was Abner's message to the elders of Israel; "now then, do it." This is the point now reached in these studies in Ephesians. In each paper reference has been made to the commanding position given to prayer and to the apostle's own prayers preserved in such detail. The purpose of concentrating now on these prayers themselves is not only to seek to understand them and their requests, but also to say, "Now then, do it."

The two prayers are given in 1: 17-19 and 3: 16-19, and it should be a help to us in making these our own prayers to note exactly what they ask for.

In 1: 17, the prayer begins by asking of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Originator of all that is truly glorious, that He will also impart the full knowledge of it. Every word and phrase of the opening section underline the fact that, although this kind of knowledge can be learned, we are dependent on God for this learning by His Spirit. "May give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" is closely parallel with Isaiah 11: 2 about Messiah: "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and

understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." God *has* given His Spirit, but this request is for the wisdom, revelation, and knowledge, which are some of His mighty works. We ought never to be afraid to pray for knowledge, the right kind of knowledge, coming to us from the right source.

A very special light is cast on this knowledge by what follows: "the eyes of your heart being enlightened." It is idle to make anatomical distinctions between head and heart and the approximate distance between them. All knowledge must in fact involve the brain, that is, in the popular phrase, be head knowledge. The bearing of "the eyes of your heart" can only be, following the insistence that it comes from God by revelation of His Spirit, that this knowledge is also in a special way bound up with the affections. In other words, the meaning is akin to the condemnation of knowledge in 1 Corinthians 8: 2 and 13: 2 as well as in 1 John 4: 8. Knowledge separated from divine love in the heart, is knowing nothing as we "ought to know."

Definiteness in praying this prayer will be helped by noting exactly the three points to be seized by this kind of knowledge. They are know-

ledge of

the hope of His calling
 the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints
 the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward

Is it possible to exaggerate the importance and effectiveness in practical life of the maturing and stabilising of knowledge (as implied by "full knowledge") on these three points? Let us attempt a paraphrase:

the certainty of attainment of what God has called us to
 the wealth of the quality of our Canaan
 the power of God to effect this in the face of every obstacle, shown already in the resurrection of Christ.

In our prayers we can go straight on to 3: 16-19 which asks for our heart's response to the knowledge given. It is, of course, not desirable, or indeed possible, to pretend to certainty on such a subject, but it is practically helpful to prayer to see the golden words "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" as the single request of the prayer. What precedes is leading up to this, and what follows are the consequences, and can only be the consequences, of Christ dwelling in the heart.

To cast the mind back over the epistle and see the tremendous extent of splendour and wealth in Christ as there set forth, and then to grasp the fact that the prayer proposes no less amazing an experience than that this glorious Being should take up His abode in our hearts, is indeed sufficient to make this *the* request.

This dwelling in hearts by faith implies the enshrining of Christ in the love of His people. It is an intensely practical matter of conscious experience and in no sense

positional only.

For this dwelling it is necessary that the inner man (shown to be of God in character in Romans 7: 22, but without strength in itself) must be strengthened by God's Spirit. The two consequences of the dwelling are seizing the breadth and length and depth and height *and* knowing the love of Christ. In this latter, we have seen earlier the heart of the epistle.

It is not difficult to see that if Christ is the centre of God's universe, then those in whose hearts Christ is dwelling are placed at the centre because He is there. This seems to be the bearing of the four dimensions. Only from the centre can the outlook include all four, breadth, length, depth and height. And it is at the centre of all that they know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. The love of Christ, and the extent of His down-stooping and of His uprising, as well as the "all things" He now fills, provide dimensions for the thoughts of God. Like a flower unfolding, so the knowledge of the love of Christ opens up out of the indwelling of Christ, and finally these experiences are seen to be the filling into all the fulness of God.

Our experience of these great matters will be limited, and therefore even our requests will not reach up to the extent of the thoughts of God, *but*, God can do *above* what we ask or think. In addition to all the other motives in all the other epistles, the things asked for in this prayer become from 4: 1 the "therefore" of lives lived worthy of the calling. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."