

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

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Editors

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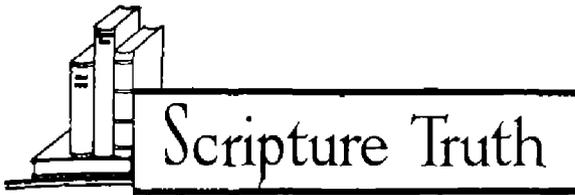
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(incorporating "Words of Help")

THE HEAVENLY CALLING ————— HAMILTON SMITH

"Holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1)

IT is deeply important to realise that, as believers in the Lord Jesus, we are not only saved from judgment, but we are called to heaven — "partakers of the heavenly calling". The Apostle does not exhort us to partake of the heavenly calling; he says we are partakers. The believer is as much a heavenly man as he is a saved man. But we have with shame to own that our conduct is not always becoming to heavenly men, any more than it is always consistent with being saved men.

We gladly own that our salvation is not "of works", but, "By grace ye are saved through faith" (Ephesians 2 : 8,9). In like manner we partake of the heavenly calling, not by "our works", but, by His grace. So we read, "God hath **saved** us and **called** us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace (2 Timothy 1 : 9). Our walk and ways neither secure our salvation, nor make us a heavenly people; but the fact that we are saved, and partake of the heavenly calling, will greatly effect our walk and ways.

The common thought even in evangelical Christendom is that the Gospel relieves us from our guilt, and then sets us up on earth as better men, and better citizens, in improved circumstances, and finally takes us to heaven when we die. There seems to be little appreciation of the great truth that Christianity takes us completely out of the world, gives us a new place in heaven, and thus makes us strangers and pilgrims on earth.

Turning from what we see in Christendom to learn from Scripture God's own thoughts, we shall find that the grace of God,

Firstly, meets our needs as sinners, and relieves us of our guilt and judgment;

Secondly, it brings us under a new power by which we are cared for and kept waiting for the coming of the One that has saved us;

Thirdly, it connects us with our new place in heaven so that even now, while yet on earth, we are partakers of the heavenly calling.

When we turn to the Gospel of Luke, it is deeply instructive to trace in the different incidents how grace in the Person of Christ has visited us from on high, reached down to us in all our depth of need to lift us into the heights from which grace came, and thus makes the sinner that believes a partaker of the heavenly calling.

(1) **The forgiveness of sins** (Luke 7 : 37,38,48,50). In the first chapter of the Gospel, Zacharias, in his hymn of praise, so beautifully can say, "The dayspring from on high hath visited us". With the coming of Jesus the new day of grace had dawned upon the world. In the fourth chapter we learn how the Lord opened this day of grace as He quotes the prophecy of Isaiah foretelling the coming of the Lord to preach the Gospel to the poor and to heal the broken-hearted. Then the Lord can say, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears". In the seventh chapter we find this grace reaching down to a poor degraded sinner and forgiving her sins. "A woman in the city which was a sinner" finds herself in the presence of the Saviour. She realises that she is in the presence of One who knows all her sins and yet is full of grace toward her. The result is, her heart is broken and her heart is won. Her tears speak of a broken heart, and her kisses of a heart that is won. At once the Lord in His grace binds up her broken heart by saying, "Thy sins are forgiven . . . thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace". Here then is the start of all our blessing. We are not forgiven because of anything that we have done, but because of what Christ has done, and we know we are forgiven, as the woman knew that she was forgiven, not because we believe that we are forgiven but because God says so. "In Him all that believe are justified from all things." This is indeed a great blessing, but, in the case of the woman the blessing hardly goes beyond the forgiveness of sins.

(2) **Carried and cared for** (Luke 10 : 33-35). In this fine scene we see a further stage in the blessings that grace brings to us. The Good Samaritan binds up the wounds of the dying man; as we may say, he receives the forgiveness of sins. But he receives further blessings. His wounds having been bound up, the Good Samaritan set the man on "his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him". And, passing on his way, he leaves a message to say that he is coming again for him. So with believers, when forgiven we are not left to find our way through this world as best we can. We are carried in the power of the One who has forgiven us; we are brought to an inn; as we may say, we are made strangers in this world, we are cared for every step of the way, and the One that has blessed us and cares for us, is coming for us. But in all this, though there is a great advance upon the truth of forgiveness there is nothing about heaven.

(3) **Heaven opened to us** (Luke 14 : 16-23). In this passage we have a great advance upon the truth brought before us in Luke 10. There we found ourselves cared for as pilgrims in this world. Here, in this beautiful picture, we learn that we are called into an entirely new scene. The supper takes place in the house and the invitation is, "Come, for all things are now ready". Not only 'Come to Christ', however true and necessary. Here the invitation is to come into a new place — the Father's house. The invitation is, "**Come**"; the servant is instructed to "**bring in hither**"; and again the word is, "Compel them to **come in**". The great object is that the house "may be filled".

Thus God tells us that He has opened His house and disclosed the desire of His heart to have His house filled with sinners saved by grace. Cast out of Paradise on earth, man has become a homeless wanderer

in this world's highways and hedges, but the grace of God can reach down to man in all his misery to bring him into the warmth and joy of the Father's house.

(4) **Sinners brought home to heaven** (Luke 15:4-6). Here we have a further advance on Luke 14. There we see the Father's house thrown open, and sinners invited to "Come". Here we see in picture lost sinners saved and brought into the home. We find the Good Shepherd going after the lost sheep. But what for? Is it simply to save the sheep? He does indeed seek and save the sheep; but He does more. He picks it up and carries it on His shoulders. But is this all? He does indeed save, and carry, and care for the sheep; but He does more; He brings it home; thus we read, "When He cometh home". What end had the shepherd before him when He went out into that lonely wilderness? Was it simply to find a wandering sheep and bring it back to the fold from whence it had strayed? Ah no! He found it, picked it up and He carried it, and He brought it **home**. Nothing less than His home will do for His sheep.

Then in the story of the prodigal son we see how grace can reach a sinner in all the misery and want into which his sin has plunged him in the far country, to bring him into all the nearness and joy of the Father's home.

Finally, in the case of the thief, brought before us in Luke 23:43, we see an actual case of one who was taken from the depths of sin to the height of paradise. The first word the Lord uttered to this man was, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise". We might have thought that surely the first word that the Lord would say would be, "Thy sins are forgiven". Ah no! the Lord's first word to this believer was to let him know that heaven was opened to him, that he was fitted for heaven and called to heaven — a partaker of the heavenly calling. Such is the efficacy of the death of Christ that the vilest sinner that believes in Him can be taken into heaven with Christ.

Why are we partakers of the heavenly calling? These incidents very blessedly tell us that grace comes down to us from on high, meets our deepest need, and lifts us to the height from whence grace came, to be with Christ in heaven. But these passages tell us more; they tell us why we are called to heaven. Does God set us before Him in heaven simply to make us happy? Truly we shall be happy, for in His presence there is fulness of joy. But, if He brings us there it is not simply for the joy of our hearts, but for the gratification of His own heart. When the Shepherd picked up the sheep, it is true that he layed it on his shoulders rejoicing; but His joy was not complete until he had brought the sheep into His own home. Then, He says, "Rejoice with Me". So with the Father; His love and compassion were expressed outside the house; but it is not until we pass within the house that we hear of the Father's joy. Then we read, "They began to be merry". This wonderful story tells us that such is the love of the Father's heart that He actually desires our company. That is why He has called us to heaven and made us partakers of the heavenly calling.

The practical effect of the heavenly calling (Hebrews 11:13-16). What, we may ask, will be the practical effect on our walk and ways

of heartily embracing the great truth that we are partakers of the heavenly calling? Do we not see the practice that flows from faith in this great truth livingly set before us in the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as recorded in Hebrews 11:13-16?

In Abraham we see one who was "called to go out into a place which he should after receive". He had the promise of "a better country, that is, an heavenly". Together with Isaac and Jacob, they saw by faith this heavenly country "afar off", and heartily embraced the promise of this country. The result was:—

Firstly, they became "strangers and pilgrims on the earth". They saw the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off. And their links with the heavenly city severed their ties with earth.

Secondly, being strangers and pilgrims they became true witnesses for God in this world, as we read. "They that say such things **declare plainly**". It was not simply what they said with their lips; it was their lives that spoke to the world around.

Thirdly, declaring "plainly", as true witnesses, they escaped the snares of the enemy who sought to draw them back into the world by giving them opportunities to return.

Fourthly, taking the place of strangers and pilgrims, declaring plainly that they seek a country, and refusing every opportunity to turn back to the world, "God is not ashamed to be called their God".

What a wonderful example we have, then, in these Old Testament worthies! In a far more direct way the heavenly calling has been opened to us since Christ has come to tell us of heavenly things. Christ has died to secure heaven for us and to fit us for heaven. We are called to heaven and made partakers of the heavenly calling. But we may well challenge our hearts by asking ourselves, Have we heartily **embraced** the heavenly calling? Have we **confessed**, in our words and ways and walk, that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth"? Have we **declared plainly** as witnesses for God that we seek a country and that our hopes are in another world? Have we **refused every opportunity** to return to this present world?

As we look at Christendom we cannot but see how the great profession has entirely failed to enter into the heavenly calling of Christianity. But what of the true people of God in the midst of the profession? And in particular, what of ourselves? What is the truth as to each one individually? Have we not each one to challenge our own hearts and ask ourselves: have we so embraced the heavenly calling, and walked in consistency with it, that at last God will be able to say of us, as He said of the patriarchs of old:—

"God is not ashamed to be called their God"?

“Through Him we both have access by One Spirit to the Father”

WHILE every word of Scripture is important, it is unquestionable that some verses are particularly full in their content and especially rewarding when thoroughly and humbly considered. The present verse, a single sentence, is of that kind; it contains a tremendous amount in its short compass. Though we shall need at times to refer to the context in which it arises, the verse makes a statement which is surely big enough to stand on its own, and our meditation in this paper will concentrate on that single statement. After a brief survey of the verse as a whole, we follow with a closer look at some of the details.

Preliminary survey

We have said that this verse is profound in its content. First, it includes the Trinity, a tremendous Theme indeed for a single verse! It speaks about God as known in the Christian day, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; God as He has revealed Himself, fully and actively. But, more than this, and adding amazingly to its riches: in consequence of His loving-kindness and rich mercy we ourselves appear in the same verse! It describes God as active in relation to us; it speaks about ourselves being enabled to respond to God. It tells of God not only revealed, but known by persons such as ourselves. It speaks about access to the Father. Here is the Christian position, the Christian status, a fact, a privilege, yet also an experience and an opportunity. This is not only truth to be held, but living experience to enter into, to enjoy, to marvel at, and to colour our manner of life (as later parts of the epistle make plain). The ‘we’ in this verse brings together people of widely diverse backgrounds. It includes Paul and his Hebrew fellow-believers, together with the Gentile recipients of his letter, and Gentile and Jewish believers of many another time and place too. It extends down the years to embrace ourselves, just as truly remote from God as these Ephesian believers had been, quite as certainly “once far off” but now “made nigh by the blood of Christ”. Our past, like theirs, with all its shame, its deadness and distance from God, is truly indicated at the opening of the chapter. Outwardly, the background of Jewish Christians was less remote and godless than that of Gentile Christians, and the spirit of separatism and disdain for the Gentiles marked them strongly in their pre-conversion days. But the truth was that they were basically on the same plane as the Gentiles; they were “by nature the children of wrath, even as others”. **This** verse, on the other hand, speaks of the **oneness** of those who now have access to the Father. Despite all disparities in the past, here is our bond as Christians. Perhaps the principal point of the verse in its context is the oneness of the Christian company. Our response to God is not made up of many disparate responses. Christ is our unity, the Spirit impelling us is One; jointly we draw near to God, even the Father. The verse describes our unison as Christians, our common indebtedness,

our common life as believers, our common energy and objective, the Source and Substance of our united response to God our Father.

Access through Christ

We shall look separately at the three phrases “through Him”, “by one Spirit”, and “to the Father”. Here are three great facets of this activity of God, in the wealth of His grace, in providing and sustaining this privilege of drawing near to Himself.

First, then, we have this access **through Christ**. This phrase focuses attention on the action which has revealed the Father, and cleared the way of approach to Him. We are made to consider the great Doer of the work which enables us to draw near to God with some appreciation of Himself. His own words on this matter are the most crucial ones: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me”, and again, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:6,9). It all has become available through Him. He is the Father’s Sent One, the executor and fulfiller of all the Father’s will, laying the great basis on which the blessing of this revelation of God could be received. His words just quoted were spoken on the eve of His death, yet they foresaw all that His death would substantiate and make available to those He loved. He spoke of days not far ahead when the experience of the kind of love that He had revealed (the Father’s love) would be theirs. He looked further ahead, too, to that ultimate place to which on His return He would take them. In wonderfully firm words He spoke of the Father’s eternal home of love, where they would be with Him where He is, in that place where the Father’s love is known and enjoyed.

This one supreme blessing of knowing God as Father, revealed in the Son, encompasses a vast spectrum of component blessings, all of which have come to us through this same Channel. Looking through the New Testament epistles and picking out the phrase “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (and kindred phrases) what a list of great gifts from God could be produced! We do this in a very partial way in a short paragraph immediately below. Note how necessary and vital some of these are, if ever we were to stand in God’s presence.

The following list is incomplete, but perhaps sufficient to indicate what a vast range of favours comes to believers **through Him**. It will be recognised that we are quoting Scripture almost verbatim in the following sentences. We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. We are justified by His blood, made righteous before God in Him. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our status before God is the outcome of His work for us. Through Him we have now received reconciliation; we can joy in God through Him. In His death we have now moved over from the realm where sin reigns into that new area of life where grace is in control; we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Freedom from bondage, deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, come “through Jesus Christ our Lord”. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God gives us the victory, over the last

and ultimate enemies, even death and the grave, through Him. Among the best things of all, our acceptance is in Him, the Beloved; our fitness, our kind of life, the quality of the love that welcomes us, all centre in Him and flow through Him. How magnificent is the measure of all that God does! The scale of our blessings reflects the infinite value of the work and the Person in whom, and through whom, they have been brought to us.

Access by One Spirit

Through Christ then, God has actively declared Himself. The way of approach to Himself has been opened wide; an absolutely right basis for that approach has been laid. The Son has revealed the Father, in a clear, objective way. But also, and very important in addition, the Holy Spirit of God makes it good to us. The great Light that shines in Christ could never dawn upon us, nor could its blessing be received, without God's work within us. Our access to the Father is "by [or, in] the Spirit". God, by the Spirit, enables our response to Himself. The Holy Spirit is at the root and centre of appreciation of these great matters. He is both the Source and Sustainer of the life that lives in the area where the knowledge of the Father is a reality.

Let us remind ourselves of a few New Testament statements about the new life of the believer. First, he has been "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8); it is the result, not of his own action, but of God's. He has received the Spirit "by the hearing of faith". His life as a Christian began in the Spirit, and continues in the Spirit: it belongs to that realm where the Spirit of God operates and is in control (Galatians 3:2,3). The believer is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Romans 8:9); the old kind of life is judged and ended at the cross, where he died with Christ; his new life has a new character, and a new area and principle of living: he lives "in the Spirit". It is important to be in tune practically with these great facts: "if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit", the Apostle urges (Galatians 5:25). Only as he is led by the Spirit, in submission to His control and teaching, can "the fruit of the Spirit" (in a word, the character of Christ) appear in the life of a Christian. Earlier verses in Galatians 5 make this clear.

But what is the Substance which feeds the life which is steered and supported by the Holy Spirit? Our Lord's own words, spoken as He looked on to the time when the Holy Spirit would indwell the disciples, answer this question. "He (the Holy Spirit) shall not speak of Himself", but rather "He shall glorify me; for He shall take of my things and show them unto you" (John 16:13-15). The life guided by the Spirit of God centres upon Christ. The Holy Spirit directs our attention to our Lord, pointing to His glory, filling our hearts with Him. Beholding the glory of the Lord, and taken up with that great Object, we enter upon a process of transformation into His likeness. This process, by this means, is brought about by "the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). All the other features of Christian living (such as Christian conduct, service, worship) depend vitally on this personal contact with our Lord, and will be characterised by a deep

awareness of His supreme glory and love. The sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ can vitalise and control all our other activities as Christians, and the objective of the Holy Spirit is to keep that vision bright and effective in our lives.

Finally, let us note the force of the word 'one' in this phrase 'by one Spirit'. People who once were poles apart, like Jews and Gentiles, are now in unity and harmony, animated by One Spirit. In Christ, the wall of partition has been removed; all distance and suspicion between the parties concerned gives place to joint appreciation of the favour of knowing God the Father through Christ. The Spirit is our bond of unity as Christians; this is true of persons who once were remote from one another in many another sense. What is shared and enjoyed belongs to the realm of the Spirit, where Christ fills and dominates everything. How true it is that to have others with us in sharing the rich blessings which are ours in Christ, and to find ourselves at one in thanksgiving and response to God the Father, deepen the joy and the reality of these things. How important, too, to be on guard lest in practice we belie this unity. Lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, love amongst ourselves, need to be fostered with diligence. We must endeavour to keep this unity of the Spirit, in a practical way, in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Access to the Father

Through Christ, God has opened up the way of approach to Himself. By the Spirit, the enablement to take that way has been given. We can draw near with true and full hearts. But where does that way lead? It is "to the Father" that it brings us. A great sense of arrival and welcome is contained in these words. As Father, God receives us with gladness into His own area of things, fulfilling His own desires in having those He loves brought near. The embrace of His love is known; He lavishes His wealth on those who are the objects of His rich and eternal love. The words "to the Father" convey the sense of homecoming. The atmosphere of the eternal home of love and joy is now our native element; already it can be enjoyed and appreciated. The home itself, with all its eternal reality, will be our ultimate dwelling-place. "Where I am, there ye shall be also" was our Lord's assuring word to His disciples as He spoke of His Second Coming and its effects for them. That home is, above all else, the place to which He, the Son of the Father, belongs; it is the place where He is central, from whence the character and quality of the eternal love has been manifested, and into which we are ultimately to be taken. Let us not fail to marvel at these great facts as we consider them. But the admission into the rich experience of the Father's love is by no means withheld until then. We **have** an open door into this realm in our spirits now, as our verse says.

Let us recall the vital importance of keeping Christ central and prominent in our Christian range of vision. Let us remember that the word of God itself makes everything of our Lord; and that the Spirit

of God points Him out too, as the Object for our attention and devotion. Let us also keep in mind that He is the unique Son of the Father's love; that the Father's voice not only expressed complete pleasure (continuous and eternal) in Him, but draws our attention to Him too. Let us bear in mind that, as we see Him, we see the Father. As occupied with Him may we find ourselves consciously before the Father, His worth and His excellences forming the substance of our responses there. Such responses will surely please the Father, and have the marks of the Holy Spirit upon them. Let all who love our Lord be so occupied on these lines, that we may be **together**, in unison and in some measure of energy, in our responses to the Father and the Son. May we know these experiences now, and until the great day comes when we shall know them to the full.

A MAN IN THE GLORY ————— ARTHUR GOODWIN

THE reader will, no doubt, have often heard the above description used of our Lord Jesus Christ in meetings, in private conversations, as well as having read it in Christian literature. It is in fact so well known and so often used that there is a danger of its becoming a spiritual cliché. This would be a pity, for there is great significance in the thought and teaching expressed by these words. But have you ever pondered why this truth is so vital — why it is fundamental that our blessed Lord, whilst most surely God, is still a Man in heaven? He became man in order to come down to this world, to die upon the Cross, to obtain an eternal redemption for us. But surely could He not, upon His ascension, have divested Himself of His manhood in the same way as He had assumed it, and have had again that same "form of God" in which He subsisted before His incarnation? That He did not, is very evident, and one text is sufficient to prove it: Stephen's words in Acts 7:56, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God".

The purpose of this paper is to examine the reasons why the Lord is 'a Man in the Glory'.

The first submission is that a risen Man in heaven is evidence of a complete and perfect salvation. He "was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). The apostle's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 as to the certainty of our salvation hinges on the grand truth of Christ's resurrection. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (v. 17). Now it is one thing to read such sublime truths, but where may I look for substantiating evidence? The answer is, to Heaven itself and there, with the eye of faith, I see the Man Christ Jesus seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. What more proof do I need, in order to be assured that the work of salvation has been perfectly accomplished, when I see the very Man who died to procure it now alive for evermore in the glory?

Another reason why He is a Man in heaven, is that He has gone

there as our Forerunner. If we have any sense of our former moral condition and the depths from which we have been brought, we might well wonder whether Heaven is not much too exalted a place for people like us. A secondary paradise, or "some low place within the door", perhaps — but the Father's House, surely we cannot expect that! Such doubts are immediately dispelled when we realise that already there is a Man in Heaven and moreover One who has gone there to prepare a place for us, and we too shall share that place which now He occupies when we have been raised and "conformed to His image". But what a comfort too to know that the Man in Heaven is our true Friend, who feels for us, inasmuch as He has entered into all our circumstances. Our privilege is to have communion with Himself, to take to Him all the exercises of our souls, to share with Him our moments of joy, to depend upon Him for the help we need along the way. We have a Companion in Heaven — the Son of man.

Allied to this thought is the statement recorded in Scripture, that He is the "first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Adam was the head of that old creation in which the many were constituted sinners because of his sin. Christ by His death upon the Cross made forgiveness of sins righteously possible, and has become the Head of a new creation in which we, sinners saved by grace, have our place. The Head is in the glory and our ultimate destiny is to be with Him.

The Scripture (Hebrews 6:20) which describes the Lord as our Forerunner also refers to Him as a High Priest, and it is submitted that it is only as man that He could exercise such an office on our behalf. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). The chief work of the high priest of old was carried out on the great Day of Atonement, when he took the blood of the sin offering and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat "within the veil". On that day he entered into the presence of Jehovah as the representative of the people. Before he could offer for the people he had first to offer for himself and, of course, in both sacrifices the blood he offered was the blood of another. But our blessed sinless Lord had no need to offer for Himself, and has Himself become the antitype of both sacrifice and high priest, when "by his own blood He entered in once to the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). So "this man" (Hebrews 8:3) is at this very moment our Representative in the presence of God. He is "not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Then, too, the Lord is in heaven as man and as the mediator between God and men; "For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5 New Tr.). The apostle here speaks of our Saviour God who desires the salvation of all men, but how could this be? How is it that a holy God on the one hand and sinful men on the other could be brought together? Job in his day

longed for such a daysman to effect a reconciliation (Job 9:32-33). The Greek form of the word 'daysman' is the very one that Paul uses when he writes to Timothy of a 'mediator'. For such a one to perform such an office, He must have the nature and attributes (sin, of course, apart) of both parties whom He will bring together. Thus, in order that He might be a mediator, our Lord must be both God and Man.

Then, as Man He will come again. The disciples, standing on the Mount of Olives, saw Him return to heaven, a risen Man, and even as they gazed upwards they were told by the men in white, "This Jesus . . . shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11 New Tr.). The implication is that He will return exactly as He left. He will return as a Man. His own words to Caiaphas also state the fact. The high priest had adjured Him to say whether He was Christ, the Son of God and in acknowledging the truth of such a charge the Lord added, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). So, whilst never ceasing to be God, He became man; as such He is in heaven, and as such He will return.

But when He finally returns to this earth it will be to reign over it and it is good to know that as Man He will be king. This world that once despised, scorned, maltreated, rejected and ultimately crucified the Man of Galilee will one day bow the knee at the mention of His Name, Jesus, and confess that He, Jesus Christ, is Lord. But I would submit that there is something more than this. His kingdom will last for a thousand years at the end of which time He will deliver it up to Him who is God and Father, that God may be all in all. In this passage from 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 we are also told that, "As in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (v. 22). We are thus reminded of Adam who was created in innocence and placed in charge of a perfect creation, a charge spoiled so soon by his sin so that in the end God had to come down in judgment upon his domain. The last Adam however will reign in perfect righteousness and equity and the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (See, for example, Isaiah 11:4-10; 65; 18-25; Zechariah 14:16-21). As a Man He will deliver such a kingdom to God. What a contrast to the first man who so quickly ruined that which God had made! Surely here we have an application of the principle enunciated in the text, "Then I restored that which I took not away (Psalm 69:4).

Lastly (and it is a solemn thought) He is still Man because it is as such that He will act as judge. We read in John 5:22 "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son", and again in Acts 17:31 (New Tr.), "God is going to judge . . . by the man whom He has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised Him from among the dead". All — saints, nations, the wicked — will, each in their own time, have to stand before the Man, Christ Jesus; some to hear His word of commendation, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"; some to hear His word of condemnation, "Depart from me ye cursed into

everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels". Thus it will be that the One who became flesh and walked through this world as the lowly One, and who was put to death by a scornful jeering people, will be the very One who will be vindicated by God and, in the very condition in which He was rejected, be the Object of everlasting praise.

THE REPENTANT SAINT _____ J. STODDART

A CONSIDERATION OF PSALM 51

PERHAPS we are more familiar with the term "repentant sinner" than the title of this paper. Both, of course, have their relevance to Scripture in differing contexts, and it is conceded that the word repentance does not occur in Psalm 51, while clearly the content of the Psalm is the prayer, or *cri de coeur* of a repentant saint. It would surely be right to describe David as such, at least in the Old Testament sense of the word "saint". God had said of him, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will" (Acts 13:22). Yet here is the man who was guilty of the most grievous sins of adultery and murder, incurring the penalty of death upon himself (cf. 2 Samuel 11 and 22). In great mercy God sends Nathan the prophet to David, and graciously but firmly was his sin brought home to him in Nathan's remarkable parable. Little doubt could be left of its application when the prophet said to David, "Thou art the man". The consequence was David's confession, "I have sinned against the Lord".

Doubtless the full detail of David's confession is the content of Psalm 51, but it would be unwise to expect here the full implications of the Gospel not yet made known. Certain elements of God's ways in grace, however, shine out in the Psalm and are instructive to us in the light of New Testament teaching. Of these, **conviction** is the first, clearly seen in vv. 1-6. How thoroughly the depth of the king's sin was fathomed when Nathan's parable was seen to apply to no other than himself. But this was accompanied by a faith that recognised God as the source of his conviction as well as the source of that mercy and loving kindness which alone could meet his need. "But where sin abounded grace has superabounded" (Romans 5:20). The accusers of the guilty woman in John chapter 8 were "convicted by their own conscience", but they went out from the presence of Jesus because of His word, while the woman remained to be blessed. It is ever the Word that effects conviction, and today the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world ensures this to both saint and sinner (cf. John 16:7-11).

Thus David's conviction is quickly followed by his **confession** in vv. 3-6. The true character of sin is that it is directed against God, even though, as with David, others were involved. Here he says, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight". Doubtless it was also against Bath-Sheba and certainly against Uriah who was murdered in battle. But only God could evaluate the enormity of his sin and He alone could forgive it. No superficial treatment

would avail, for his very nature and birth were contaminated by sin, and God required truth and wisdom in the inward parts hidden from the eye. What God would do must prove that He is both “just and the justifier of the believer”, and manifest His own righteousness in all His ways. All this we see in His dealings with David at this time.

It would seem that repentance in the believer is either a ladder with constantly ascending steps or, to change the metaphor, a tree whose roots grow continually deeper. The notion that repentance is only the initial movement of the soul Godward is not strictly in accordance with Scripture, as we shall see — so in terms of the first metaphor, **conviction** would be the first rung of the ladder and **confession** the next in order in vv. 7-12. Surely the need for this is only realised when the holiness of God and what becomes His presence is learned. David had backslidden seriously, grieved the Holy Spirit and lost the sense of God’s presence. Only the most effective **cleansing** could restore his communion with God. He cries, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean”. This is not the application of Exodus 12:22 but rather the sprinkling of the water of separation for the cleansing from defilement through contact with death (cf. Numbers 19:18). Hyssop was the means of sprinkling thus employed. Solomon “spake of trees, from the cedar tree . . . even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall” (1 Kings 4:33). Thus it was a lowly plant, contrasting sharply with the lofty cedars of Lebanon. What a remarkable likeness to the action of the lowly Jesus stooping to wash the feet of His disciples with water (John 13) so perfectly illustrating the truth subsequently to be revealed in Ephesians 5:26, that, “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. Such cleansing is thus seen to be a continuing process, as repentance grows, deepens and appreciates His loving desire to fit us for “part with Him”. Striking it is, too, that it was to the Church in Ephesus it was said in Revelation 2:4-5, “Thou hast left thy first love [as did David]. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and **repent**, else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, **except thou repent**”. Saints in repentance!

The next step in Psalm 51 is the recognition that should the Holy Spirit be withdrawn from him he would be powerless. He prays (though we may not in this day of grace) that this might not happen. But with a clean heart and renewed spirit, restored joy of salvation, upheld in power, he would then be a fit vessel for the Master’s use, able to teach others God’s ways and “sinners shall be converted unto Thee”. This rung of the ladder (or deepening root) of repentance could be called **consecration**, for surely the service of God’s House is in view; still with deep self-judgment, he would sing aloud of God’s righteousness. He would open his lips in praise to God. Sealed and indwelt with the Holy Spirit in our day (in a way that David never could know), should our consecration to God’s service and praise be less than his? How much do we know of repentance taking us to such heights and depths? If we say we have nothing of which to repent would this not savour of self-righteousness and Laodiceanism, besides

being contrary to the teaching of 1 John 1? Of the seven churches addressed by the Spirit in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, three were admonished to **repent**, including the first (Ephesus) and the last (Laodicea). Does the Spirit speak to us in different terms today?

The writer is aware that others have seen in Psalm 51 an application to Israel's national repentance in a day to come, as depicted in Scriptures such as Zechariah 13 and Acts 3 and elsewhere. While this may be admissible, undeniably the immediate subject of the Psalm is David's **sin**, the failure and restoration of a saint, and in type conforms to the offering of the red heifer and the water of separation referred to in Numbers 19. The New Testament word for repentance is '**metanoia**' which refers basically to a change of mind. The necessity for this in connection with the salvation of the soul is clearly seen in Scriptures such as Luke 24:47 and Acts 20:21 etc. But from this initial act of repentance and faith, surely the process grows and deepens as we are continuously "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (cf. Romans 12:2). Too often is repentance thought of in terms of turning away from sin, true enough in the negative sense, but there is much more than this, as we may learn from 1 Thessalonians 1:9 where they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." That this was both initial and continuing is seen in 1 Thessalonians 2:13. When the soul is truly turned to God and God is learned in His grace and love and holiness, then a wonderful and progressive field is opened up by the Spirit in knowing conviction, confession, cleansing, consecration, and **communion** with God. Here, without doubt, is the highest experience of the believer.

David at the end of Psalm 51 rises to the appreciation of what is suitable to God and acceptable to Him. Not the material sacrifices of the Law, but that of a "broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart" so becoming to the saint and, at once, so pleasing to the heart of God (cf. Micah 6:7 and Malachi 1:8). David, the repentant saint, is now thinking God's thoughts after Him, morally in condition to look far beyond both his day and ours and commune with God as to His purposed millennial blessing for Israel, when God's pleasure would be fulfilled in Zion, the city of the great King, when the broken walls of Jerusalem would be built again and His restored people would again offer sacrifices pleasing to God. Not looking forward to the Cross (as under the Law) but sacrifices of righteousness and whole burnt offerings to commemorate the One Perfect Sacrifice at Calvary, the sure foundation of all blessing, whether millennial or eternal.

Is our **communion** with God great enough to cause us to think beyond our own blessing and envisage the vast scene of glory which will not only "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea" (Habbakuk 2:14), but will further extend into the realms of His eternal purpose and counsel, when "in the administration of the fulness of times He will head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and things upon the earth (Ephesians 1:10 New Tr.). **Communion** then is the greatest favour bestowed upon the repentant saint (while as yet unknown to the repentant sinner). What encouragement there is, therefore, to take the place of the broken and contrite heart, to thus be

able to enter into and enjoy the things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him . . . which God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit" (1 Corinthians 1:9-10).

Finally, as to the saints' repentance in this day, let us remember Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth: noting their repentance resulting from his first epistle he now says, "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to **repentance**: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner . . . for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of". What joy and restored communion with God followed the repentance of these saints! In this day of declension, division and departure from the truth, what recovery, what rejoicing, what furthering of the interests of Christ, what blessing in the Gospel would result from heartfelt repentance in the Church and surely God would be glorified.

PASTORAL MINISTRY —PAUL FUSIER

[The first part of an article translated from *Messenger Evangelique*]

PASTORAL ministry in homes is unfortunately often neglected. Doubtless there are various reasons for this falling off in an activity which is nevertheless most effective. On the one hand those who are specially qualified to exercise it — the elders in a local assembly, pastors ministering in the assemblies in general — are often at fault in not doing the work. On the other hand, the enemy has succeeded in organising the world, of which he is the prince, so that those who ought to be visited are more and more fully occupied and, in short, no longer have time for receiving visits. Let us not reconcile ourselves to this state of affairs as inevitable: let us ask the Lord to raise up, to prepare, to guide instruments qualified for this service, and, in addition, that He will open doors.

When one can talk to people in the home, hearts can be opened, needs can be brought to light more freely; the visiting brother can receive from the Lord the necessary discernment as to the condition, and as to the circumstances of those whom he has come to see, and in this way he can be led to give the appropriate word. In how many situations aggravation might have been avoided if there had been, in the home, a pastoral ministry fulfilled by a true elder or by a pastor equipped for it! In so many cases a root of evil continues simply because, at the point of origin, indispensable help was lacking.

Let this cause us exercise, and drive us to pray to the Lord, that the remedy may be applied to such a state of things! First, let us be awakened to this challenge. But, on the other hand, may God keep us from the dangers which would result from visits made in an unsuitable manner, visits used to spread idle tales, on which it had been better to maintain silence, even to spread scandals or calumnies! One visit may do a great deal of good; others can do equal harm.

In order to be truly profitable and beneficial, a visit must be

preceded by prayer; it is necessary that the Lord Himself prepare the instrument that He wants to use, and that He prepare also the hearts and consciences of the person visited. Only the Lord can enable us to put from us all that would make for evil rather than produce good. Let it be added that, during the visit itself, there is room for silent intercession, for ejaculatory prayer addressed to the Lord, so that He might act in a delicate moment, bringing the help needed. And after the visit, how good it is to look still to Him to bless the word spoken, and to touch those who have heard it, so that it encourages him who spoke it, permitting him to experience the fact that "the liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:25).

During the first days of the history of the Church on earth, the apostles were active in fulfilling a valuable ministry in houses. After their release, the apostles "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, and daily in the temple and from house to house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:41,42). Paul, taking leave of the Ephesian elders, could say to them, "I kept nothing back that was profitable to you, but I have shewed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20,21).

In this way they were imitators of Him who had been the perfect Servant here below, who often went into one house or another to meet the needs of those who lived there. In the Gospel of Luke especially, we often see the Lord in houses. We see Him in the house of His disciple Simon; there He healed Simon's mother-in-law, so that she, showing her great thankfulness, "arose and ministered unto them" (Luke 4:38,39). It is in a house that, in the following chapter, a paralytic man was brought to Him, whom He healed, and who was able to go away "glorifying God" (Luke 5:15-26). Then we see Him in the house of Levi, to whom He had said, "Follow me", and who "left all and followed Him" (Luke 5:27-29). In the seventh chapter, in the house of the inconsiderate Simon the Pharisee, came a woman "which was a sinner", but whose sins were forgiven, "for she loved much" (Luke 7:36-50).

In a house the Lord raised the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:41,42,49,50). We only mention the houses of two further Pharisees in which we find the Lord (Luke 11:37-54; 14:1-24), the house of Zacchaeus where Christ "must abide" that day, and the house where He celebrated that Passover which "with desire" He had desired to eat with His disciples before He suffered (Luke 22:7-20). How privileged that "goodman" was! Finally, it was in the house at Emmaus, that He made Himself known "in the breaking of bread" to two disheartened disciples.

THE HOME AT BETHANY _____ **PAUL FUSIER**

[The second part of an article translated from
Messenger Evangélique]

AMONG the various houses which the Lord visited, one was like a refreshing oasis for his heart in the desert of this world. Up to the age of about thirty years He lived in the house of Joseph and Mary; but during the years of His public ministry He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). However, and without losing sight of this word of the Lord, can we not say that the house at Bethany was as it were His home? There, there were hearts which loved Him and whom He loved; there doubtless He felt Himself at home. And when the moment comes when He is to leave this world, "he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51). Does it not appear, in a way, that He is leaving His house on earth to enter His Father's house in heaven?

Martha and Mary

In Luke 10:38 it is said that, "he entered into a certain village". In John 11 we learn that it was Bethany. "And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house". It thus appears that Martha was the elder sister and in consequence the mistress of the house. We cannot doubt that she loved the Lord deeply. Doubtless she had noticed on His face signs of the fatigue experienced by Him, the true Samaritan of the parable just recounted. Martha therefore wanted to give Jesus a good welcome into her house, to get ready for Him the things which could revive Him from His weariness.

While she spent herself in this manner without counting the cost, her sister Mary, seated at Jesus' feet, was listening to His word. We have here two quite different kinds of action, which enable us to see the states of heart of the two sisters. It is the presence of the Lord which brings to light the state of heart and the spiritual condition. Martha wanted to *give*. Mary desired to *receive*! Which is the more important? Which possesses the greater value: what we do for the Lord, or what we receive from Him? Without any doubt, it is what we receive. And before "doing", we must "receive".

In times of intense activity, when we think everything of "doing" something, when we might perhaps reproach believers who choose Mary's place with being silent, or contemplative, or even lazy, it is worth taking the trouble to pause over the scene which lies before us here. Yes, Mary was doing nothing, but the only thing she had to do at that moment was to listen. Soon, action will be called for, but only afterward, and Mary will know then how to do it in such a way that the Lord will be exalted.

Martha was concerned, then, with the proper reception of the Lord, as He entered her house: one can hardly reproach her. But she was "cumbered about much serving" (Luke 10:40). To serve the Lord is entirely desirable — may we be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58) — but let us take care, in doing so, not to be distraught with service! Which is pre-eminent in our thoughts: the Lord, or *our* service? May each one examine himself in this matter in God's light in the presence of Him who knows the state of our hearts and before whom nothing can be hidden.

Martha, then, comes to Jesus, and even goes so far as to reproach Him. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" And to this she adds an injunction, "Bid her therefore that she help me". The Lord replies, and His answer is at the same time useful teaching for Martha and an encouragement for Mary. Still today, the Lord is pleased to encourage those who are in the one place needful, and who might be criticised by others of boundless activity.

Lazarus sick

After this, it is in chapter 11 of John's Gospel that Jesus is found again in the home at Bethany.

From the beginning of this Gospel the Lord is presented as the One who came into the world, "and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not" (John 1:10-11). His ministry begins in chapter 4, and in fact we see Him all along rejected by the world and rejected by His people. In particular, in chapter 8, His words were rejected; in chapter 9, it is His works, and in chapter 10, it is Himself: "Then the Jews took up stones to stone him" (10:31). Henceforth it is death which is before Him; but first, God wills that a triple witness should be rendered to Him. We have then as it were a recommencement of His pathway here below: "He escaped out of their hand, And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptised; and there he abode" (10:39,40 — compare 1:28; the locality named Bethany is not the place where Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived). Jesus is now to be glorified as Son of God, King of Israel, and Son of man (John 11; 12:12-26). Afterwards, following these three manifestations, it is the unspeakable sufferings of the cross that stand before Him. "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. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (12:27, 28).

It is in chapter eleven that we reach the shining of the glory of the Son of God (vv. 40-44). In this chapter we learn that Martha and Mary had a brother, Lazarus; this comes in the parenthesis of v. 2, a parenthesis which, let us note, engages us with a fact which was yet future, and must have been subsequent to the death and resurrection of Lazarus (cp. 12:1-3). But Mary's act at that moment possesses such value in the eyes of God and for the heart of the Lord, that the Holy Spirit mentions it at the beginning of chapter eleven, before it was done.

Lazarus, then, was sick. Why does this trial come to the home at Bethany? There are so many "Why's" on our lips . . . It might appear that the home at Bethany ought to have been preserved, that in consideration of all that Jesus had found there, it ought to have been sheltered from every difficult circumstance. But it would be a mistake for us to think that those for whom the Lord manifests an intimate love will never be visited by trial. Trial is often necessary "to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deuteronomy 8:16), and is always an enrichment when we go through it with the Lord. It had to come to the home at Bethany, and this chapter of John's Gospel, together with the beginning of the next, gives us to understand the reasons for it.

Lazarus sick! What are the two sisters going to do? They appeal to the Lord, but limit themselves to stating the circumstances, without asking for anything. "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick". Nothing else! They know — doubtless Mary understands better than Martha — that they have only to tell the Lord that their trial has begun; He it is who knows what is to be done, and He knows far better than they. But their appeal is to His heart — "he whom *thou lovest*" — in the certainty that His love will lead Him to do what will be for their highest good. Let us imitate the example of the two sisters in the trials and testing circumstances through which we have to go! In communion with His Father, Jesus can say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (vv. 3, 4). Such is the first reason for which the trial came into the home at Bethany: the glory of God, the glory of the Son of God must shine out! The desire of God would be that the trials through which He causes us to pass should always have as their first result the manifestation of His glory and the glory of the Lord. May our submission to His will, our patience in trial, our confidence in Him, in His love, our joy even through the suffering we experience at times — may all this cause some rays of the glory of God to shine out.

The Lord "abode there two days still in the same place where he was" (v. 6) and the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the evangelist, underlines the fact that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (v. 5). For these two days' delay could cause it to be supposed that the love of Jesus for them was not very deep. Jesus was awaiting His Father's command. As long as He had not received it, neither anything nor anyone could make Him go forward. But as soon as He does receive it, neither anything nor anyone can stop Him (vv. 7-10).

The Father makes known to the Son how it is with Lazarus, so that Jesus can say to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I

go, that I may awake him out of sleep". Since the disciples did not understand, He then speaks to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe" (vv. 11-15). Here is the second reason for which the trial had been sent: the disciples must see the Lord raise from the dead a man already four days in the grave; their faith must be strengthened. Through *our* trials, is the faith of our circle, family, and brothers and sisters in Christ strengthened? Can each one say that they are built up and encouraged in seeing how the Lord sustains one of His own amid suffering?

A third reason is of the same kind as the second: that unbelievers might be led to believe in Jesus the Saviour. At the grave of Lazarus, addressing Himself to His Father, He will say, "but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (v. 42). And in chapter 12 we read, "But the chief priests consulted how they might put Lazarus to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus" (vv. 10,11). Here also let us question ourselves: are we seeing in our testings a means in the hands of God of bringing some who do not yet know Him to the knowledge of the Saviour?

Jesus comes to Bethany. In the first place He brings the teaching fitting this particular trial, a teaching which has, in the course of the ages, established the faith of the children of God: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (vv. 25-26). Verse 25 perhaps applies to the departed believers, and verse 26 to those who are alive at the coming of the Lord*.

When Jesus met Mary, and saw her weeping, "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept" (vv. 33-35). What a scene! Jesus is in the presence of death, the wages of sin, one of the results of the disobedience of the first man in the garden of Eden. What consequences! What sorrow! In the presence of this, Jesus weeps. But also, He weeps because He enters with sympathy into the sufferings of the two sisters. And this is the fourth reason for which trial touched this home. Martha and Mary had to learn to know the heart of the Lord, His sympathy, His tenderness; it was necessary that they should see Him weeping.

Mary had certainly learned a lot at the feet of Jesus, listening to His word, but something was missing which she could not learn in the circumstances of Luke 10. The sickness and death of Lazarus had to come so that it might be given to her to see Jesus weeping, so that she might see His tears after having heard His voice. Perhaps we have given ourselves to much reading, and indeed to much study of the word of God — and may it please God to give us to do it diligently — but we must pass through trials if we are to learn to know the sympathy which is in the heart of the Lord, to learn to know Him in reality, Himself.

*It is suggested that v. 25 applies to the bodies of believers, and v. 26 to their spirits, as also 'resurrection' and 'life' respectively (Ed.).

Jesus was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, the only one whom He raised after four days in the grave, that is after corruption had already set in. At His voice of command — “Lazarus, come forth!” — the dead man came out of the grave, in resurrection, just as all “the dead in Christ” will come forth from their graves at the coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). Only the Son of God, by His divine power, is able to call a dead man from the grave into life again; but the Son of God, who had come here below in manhood, acts always in dependence upon His Father: “And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou always hearest me, but because of the people which stand by, I said it . . .” (vv. 41-42). This deliverance, effectuated by His power as Son of God, He received as an answer to His prayer.

Mary's Service

The events of John chapter 12 follow, events which take place “in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper” (Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3), but in the course of which we meet again Martha, Mary and Lazarus. “Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment” (12:1-3). The fifth reason why trial had to come to the Bethany home: it was sent to lead Mary to exalt Jesus. Trial is sent to us to lead us to glorify Him whom we have learned to know better, so that we can pour out the perfume at His feet.

Let us meditate on Mary's act: an ointment which could have been sold for “three hundred pence” (v. 5), “more than three hundred pence” (Mark 14:5), “sold for much” (Matthew 26:9) — an ointment of such preciousness was poured out! But it was poured out at the feet of Jesus. The denarius (= penny) was the wage of a labourer for a day's work; hence the value of the ointment poured out by Mary represented the wages for a year's work. What intelligence was given her to do what she did! What acquaintance with Jesus and with what was suitable at that moment! What love for Him! How the Lord appreciated it! And He discerned that she did it “against [His] burying” (John 12:7). In Matthew's Gospel the Lord adds, “Verily I say unto you. Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her” (Matthew 26:13).

Mary thus performed two acts of service which we are expressly called on to fulfil: the sacrifice of praise, and the sacrifice of our goods. We are exhorted to offer by Jesus Christ “the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name”, and the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews adds, “But to do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:15,16). The collection

forms an integral part of the response to God which it is our privilege to render.

In the scene of Luke 10:38-42, Mary "sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word"; in the scene described in John 11 she learned to know the Lord better, His tenderness and His sympathy. She was thus prepared for the service of praise. When we come to worship in the sanctuary, on the first day of the week, meeting together as an expression of the Assembly round its Head, we are called to present Jesus to the Father, the excellence of His Person and the perfection of His work. The theme of the assembly's praise, both for the present time and for eternity, is Christ.

The fact that we too little take our place, seated at His feet, to hear His word — that we pass through so many trials and exercises sent to us by Him, without extracting all the spiritual profit for which these circumstances come, without being enriched in the knowledge of Jesus as much as we ought — do these things not explain at least in part the weakness too often manifested in our service of adoration? In order to speak to God of His well-beloved (that is worship!) we must first have learned to know Him, we must have listened to His voice, have tasted and appreciated what there is in His heart.

Pray God that in the course of, and as the result of, the trials through which it seems good to Him to cause us to pass, some at least of the fruit produced at Bethany may be manifested, to His glory and to the glory of our Lord. May this teach us to know Jesus better, all there is in His heart, His sympathy; and thus may it be granted to us to be able to pour out the sweet savour.

FELLOW-WORKERS WITH PAUL _____ T. D. SPICER

5. TITUS

TITUS, a trusted companion of the Apostle Paul, is not mentioned in the Book of Acts and all our information concerning him is to be found in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians and the Pastoral Epistles. From these we discover that he was born of Gentile parents and subsequently won for Christ, since Paul calls him "my own son after the common faith" (Titus 1:4). He may have been converted through the instrumentality of the Apostle and this would associate him with Paul by the closest of ties.

While on his third missionary journey the Apostle Paul passed for the second time through the district of Galatia. Shortly after this second visit he heard of his converts there falling into serious errors and this caused him to write the Epistle to the Galatians. It is here that the first reference to Titus occurs and it is interesting to note that he is mentioned in such a way as to convey the impression that he was well known to the Galatian believers. From this we may infer that he was among Paul's companions on this part of his travels.

In Antioch and Jerusalem

The facts concerning Titus mentioned in the Letter take us back in time. Paul, in the course of his argument on the freedom of the Church from the necessity of Jewish practices, tells of the important journey he made with Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem. Among certain others who were with him (Acts 15:2) was Titus and it is added in his Letter that he being a Greek was not "compelled to be circumcised" (Galatians 2:3). Great efforts were evidently made to exercise compulsion; but they were strongly resisted, and the resistance was reinforced by cogent arguments. From this we learn that Titus, unlike Timothy, was a true Gentile. He was, in fact, a representative of the Gentile believers on this occasion in the same way as Barnabas was of Jewish believers.

We find also that Titus had been at Antioch with Paul and Barnabas during the time of their united and active work in that place, and it may well have been that he was converted there. Of the work of Titus in the interval between the conference at Jerusalem and Paul's second visit to Galatia, a period of several years, we know nothing.

With the writing of the second Epistle to the Corinthians we have a clear view of the subject of our study. Titus had been sent to Corinth on account of certain abuses there which had caused some concern to the Apostle. He and another brother (2 Corinthians 12:18) were possibly sent as bearers of the first Epistle. The task was a delicate one and Paul speaks of him and his mission warmly and openly to the Corinthians, telling of his anxiety to meet him on his return.

In Corinth

It is hard to find in any of the Apostle's letters a warmer expression of gratitude and rejoicing, and we can see very plainly that this feeling is connected with certain qualities in Titus himself. Paul was "filled with comfort and was exceeding joyful in all his tribulation". Prior to meeting Titus he has said no less: "we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God . . . comforted us by the coming of Titus". It was one thing to enjoy the sympathy of a congenial companion; but more than this: "not by his coming only" was the Apostle comforted, but by the response to the Apostle's letter which Titus had of the Corinthians. He was able to tell the Apostle of their earnest repentance, of their zeal for him, of their sorrow for their sin, and of their eagerness to clear themselves in the matter (2 Corinthians 7:4-11).

Now the point of interest for us is that, Titus sharing in the fellowship of Paul, whatever joy and comfort the Apostle experienced in the recovery of these erring Corinthians was reflected, and indeed had been anticipated, in the messenger. It was not simply Paul that was comforted, but Titus, who brought the news, was also sensible of the consolation. All this is brought out explicitly in the passage, "we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. His inward

affection is more abundant towards you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him" (2 Corinthians 7:13,15). No words show more clearly both the affection and loyal nature of Titus and also his intense hatred of evil and hearty rejoicing in the truth. Here were two hearts which could beat as one; the evidence of two Spirit-filled men whose love for the Lord, and their concern for His glory in the Church, motivated them continually. "The love of Christ constrains us", wrote Paul (2 Corinthians 5:14), and Titus was one of those included in the 'us'.

But this is not all that the Epistle tells us with regard to the mission and character of Titus. The Lord had evidently moved the hearts of the saints in Macedonia and Achaia to send a contribution to the poor brethren of Jerusalem. Paul warmly approved of the project, but the Corinthian brethren were evidently lagging behind in the execution of it. Titus was authorised to 'deal' with this question and it was necessary for him to have firmness and tact, as well as strict integrity. In both respects he received warm commendation from the Apostle, both for the zeal he showed in animating them at the outset, and for his moral courage afterwards in arousing their flagging generosity (2 Corinthians 8:16,17). The mere fact of his being sent on such a mission is high praise; and nothing can exceed the confidence expressed in the words: "whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you" (8:23). Paul rejects the imputation which has been cast on his own honour and faithfulness and says, "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? Did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we not in the same steps?" (2 Corinthians 12:17,18). Again, the evidence is that here were two servants who were "of the same mind in the Lord".

In Crete

Again there is a gap in the biography, and Titus does not appear in companionship with Paul on any subsequent journey; nor does his name appear in connection with events at Jerusalem leading up to Paul's appeal to Caesar and subsequent imprisonment in Rome. It is in the Epistle written personally to Titus that we find our next insight into the character and disposition of this man of God. The Letter to Titus informs us that he had been left in Crete to put right the affairs of the church on the island.

The Cretans, to whom Titus was sent, were described in the most unfavourable terms (Titus 1:12) and under these circumstances he is to set in order "the things that are wanting", to "exhort and convince the gainsayers", to "rebuke sharply" those who speak the things that spread bad doctrine, to preach obedience to magistrates and to reject heretics. He to whom such a commission was entrusted by Paul could not have been wanting in energy, judgment, or strength of character; the positive proof of this was a life lived under the control of the Holy Spirit. His mission, however, was only a short one and he was told at the end of the Letter to re-join the Apostle in Nicopolis.

The last glimpse of this man of God and companion of the

Apostle Paul is found in the later Letter to Timothy, where we read that Titus had gone to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10). Was this another situation like that of Corinth, or were the circumstances of the church there similar to those in Crete? We cannot tell; but from our study we know that the task in hand would be tackled with those high qualities which show Titus to be a character well worthy to be admired and imitated.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER———E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

Read Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8

WE are told that in the millennium all Israel will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. But when Christ came to them preaching the imminence of the Kingdom of God the reception of His message was very far from this — a very patchy reception indeed. Soon not only unbelief showed itself, but opposition and deadly enmity.

It was then that the Lord began a different form of testimony, and addressed, not the people as a whole, but him that had ears to hear (to use the Lord's expressive phrase). He clothed His message increasingly in parabolic form, so that spiritual discernment was needed to understand it. This again was in accordance with His word, "To him that hath shall be given". It thus tested the hearts of the hearers. We trace the change in Matthew chapters 10, 11 and 12; while in chapter 13 we begin with the first parable, that of the Sower. This parable sets out the possible reactions to the message.

When later the gospel went out to the Gentiles, it was a full and plain presentation of the story of grace, telling how the Saviour had died and risen again and ascended into heaven. It called upon men to believe in Him and receive eternal life. But the hearts of men proved little more ready than Israel's to receive the message, and the same parable describes their varied response, as the gospel tests men's hearts. What response shall I give?

The parable is too well known to need description, so let us come at once to the various responses.

First. The Wayside Hearer

Some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured it. The various conditions of heart are pictured by the different kinds of soil; and here indeed there is no soil at all, in the ordinary sense. The pathway trodden hard by many feet paints a picture of the soul that is totally occupied with the activities of the present life. The heavenly message is not just refused, but makes no impression at all; it simply is not understood. And as the birds are ready to pick up the seed, so is Satan ready with countless distractions to prevent the pathway hearer retaining and pondering on the message. Thus it is soon forgotten.

Second. The Rocky Places Hearer

And some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had no root, they withered away. The soil here being shallow, the germinating seed rapidly shows a green shoot, but there is no chance for an adequate root system to develop. So the plant cannot withstand the hot, drying sun and soon withers. This describes a case in which the promise of blessing which the gospel brings is gladly accepted, but the need for a radical change of heart is not realised. Surface emotions may be stirred, but a real attachment to the Saviour is not formed. Thus what is lightly held is easily given up when trouble or persecution arises on account of the truth.

It is to be feared that the type of gospel preaching which makes it an easy thing to come to the Saviour encourages this type of response. The mistake is, in extolling the free grace of the Saviour, the tremendous change (that only He can bring about) in subduing the rebellious soul of man is overlooked.

These first two cases lead us to the observation that the Lord is describing the result of seed sowing rather than the life experience of a soul. God speaks many times to men, and if one sowing is unfruitful, another may be better received.

Third. Seed Falling among Thorns

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. In this case the young plant shoots up, but among the thorns it is deprived of light and air, and becomes weak and spindly, and produces no fruit of any value.

The lack of satisfactory response takes longer to show itself in this case. The thorns, as the Lord explained, represent competing interests. On the one hand there is an interest in the things of God, a desire to share in the blessings which faith in the Saviour promises; but this desire is stifled when the pressure of life's anxieties becomes too great. The blessings of faith seem distant, the anxieties are immediate, and present things so easily win the day.

The Lord mentioned also the deceitfulness of riches. Following the new-found Saviour is discovered to be ultimately inconsistent with the determination to acquire wealth, and again the earthly interest wins.

They bring no fruit to perfection. This result, as Luke expresses it, does not mean a not very fruitful Christian life. Fruit which does not reach maturity is quite useless, so that the seed falling among thorns points to a response which does not endure.

Fourth. Seed Falling into Good Ground

But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. The Gospels use different expressions in describing the destiny of the seed in this case.

In Matthew it is said to be “understood”, in Mark “received”, while Luke tells us that the hearers, “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it [i.e. hold it fast] and bring forth fruit with patience.”

With this we may compare Paul’s commendation of the Thessalonian believers, who received the word, not as the word of men but as the word of God, which effectually works in those that believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

May we then interpret these expressions as meaning that the word was pondered, and seen to be unlike the fleeting words of men. Then, received as from God, it was believed, and understood, and so held fast. The fruit followed.

“Bring forth fruit with patience,” Luke records. This underlines the difference from the stony and thorny ground hearers. In several places Scripture uses steady continuance as a criterion of true conversion. In Colossians it is, “if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”. The converts at Antioch were “persuaded to continue in the grace of God” by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13). The writer of Hebrews says, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition,” and very strikingly adds the actual basis of salvation as “of them that *believe* to the saving of the soul”.

Differing Fruitfulness

And brought forth fruit some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. This is a very significant addition in regard to the “good ground” response. How true it is in fact among believers scarcely needs saying, but instead of looking at others, it is profitable for each believer to ask, “How can I be more fruitful?” What exactly is meant by fruit? Or, what response to the preached word does the great Sower look for, as He by His servants sows it throughout the world?

First, the response of obedience in place of disobedient self-will; then of faith and dependence in place of mistrust and something closely resembling hatred; then of a desire to please the new Master which takes precedence over every other desire. Then of a slowly growing understanding of the grace and love of the Saviour and a gradual transformation into His likeness, a growing conformity to His spirit and purpose and love. We need to beware of mere sentimentality. He says, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

Our fruitfulness therefore depends on the degree in which this is fulfilled in us. The word which gave us life is the word upon which we must feed and meditate, so keeping our eye upon our great Exemplar and seeking by the help of God’s Spirit to flee ourselves from whatever is unworthy of Him.

THE MOST HIGH

ALLAN RETALLICK

PART ONE: THE OLD TESTAMENT

IT is profitable, as we read through the Bible, to see the different names by which God made Himself known to His people. In the gracious and blessed progress of His self-revelation in and through these names, the culminating point is in Christianity, in the revelation of the Father's Name. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world" (John 17:6). Here we have completion and finality. "This is eternal life, that they might know thee [the Father], the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (v. 3). In this name of love is gathered up all the meaning of previous manifestations of God, and there is nothing beyond it. Nevertheless, the names in which God previously manifested Himself in a partial manner were in the highest degree comforting and strengthening to those who received such disclosures. Also, these names determined the character of the responsive worship which God desired. The subject of this present study is the millennial name of God — the Most High.

In the Pentateuch

In the first chapter of Genesis we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". This name, *Elohim* (a plural word), brings before us One who is self-existent and Divine. As soon as the first man comes on the scene, we read a new name — the LORD God (*Jehovah Elohim*). This new name, composed of that already used and *Jehovah*, One that was, that is, and that will be, is a name that God as creator used in relation to His creature. When the story of Abraham opens we read that, "the LORD had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country" (Genesis 12:1). Later in the same chapter we read that the LORD appeared unto Abram, and that Abram built an altar to the LORD. This Divine name is used in the following chapters in all the history of Abram and his nephew Lot. When we come to chapter 14, Lot has already chosen his own way, and is found in the wicked city of Sodom, so that he gets involved in the war between two rival groups of kings, and is taken prisoner. It is "Abram the Hebrew" who goes to his rescue and brings back all that he had lost. When Abram returns from this successful campaign, we read of two men that came to meet him. The first is the king of Sodom, of whom we read no more for the moment, for another appears on the scene, Melchizedek, "king of Salem", and "priest of the most high God". This title is used four times in these few verses, and in two of these it is followed by the designation, "possessor of heaven and earth". This mysterious king-priest brings bread and wine to Abram, and blesses him in the name of the most high God. This title can be variously rendered "Highest", "High and Mighty", or, "the Mighty High One", and may perhaps suggest that whereas man has found other unworthy objects of worship, One alone is supreme and self-existent. No wonder that, after meeting with one that was priest of

the supreme God, Abram was able to refuse what the king of Sodom had to offer! He demonstrated that he had learnt the lesson contained in this name, of Him who was "possessor of heaven and earth". "I have to lift up my hand," he says to the king of Sodom, "to the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich". This is perhaps a foreshadowing of the temptations of our blessed Lord, when the devil says to Him, "All this power I will give thee, and the glory of them. . . . If therefore thou wilt worship me, all will be thine" (Luke 4:6-7). Our Lord did not answer (as well He might have done) that He was the Son of the Highest, the Possessor of all things, and that the Father had delivered all things into His hand. Instead, as we often remind ourselves, He acted as the dependent Man and said simply, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". In this as in all else in His obedient pathway, He left us an example that we should follow His steps.

The title of "the most High" is used by Balaam in his final pronouncement against Israel, when Balak had hired him to curse the people of God. He described himself as "he . . . which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty" (Numbers 24:16). From what we know of Balaam his knowledge of God must have been at best superficial, for it seems that his love of gain outweighed the conviction he expressed to his patron, "I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind". He uses four of the Divine names: the LORD, God, the most High, and the Almighty, by which last name God revealed Himself to Abram after the scene at the end of Genesis 14. The thought of a God who possessed heaven and earth, High above all the gods of the heathen, is particularly appropriate, for Balak had spoken of a people come out of Egypt, covering the face of the earth. Moses, too, in his wonderful song recorded in Deuteronomy 32 tells us (v. 8), that "when the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel". As Possessor of heaven and earth, He has determined the bounds of their habitation, as the apostle Paul told the men of Athens in his day. No wonder the prophets were inspired to pronounce woes on those that divided up the land of Israel. Let the heads of nations in our own day also heed these warnings!

In the Psalms

In David's song of deliverance (2 Samuel 22; also Psalm 18), he began to sing of the LORD, his rock, his fortress and his deliverer, then as the *God* of his rock, naming him his shield, his horn of salvation, his high tower, his refuge, his Saviour, who saved him from violence. But in verse 13 he also takes up this title: "The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice". Whether he was referring here to his own wonderful deliverance, or to the giving of the

Law at Mount Sinai, the fact is here recorded that the most High has spoken, has made His will known. The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with the fact that "God has spoken", and in chapter 12 we read of the seriousness of refusing Him who speaks from heaven. The apostles testified in Lystra that God, even in His creation, has not left Himself without witness; it is in His word, however, that we have the full and complete revelation of His Person, known through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Psalms the title "most High", occurs many times, mostly in connection with praise. "I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High" (Psalm 9:2). Psalm 21:7 tells us that the most High is merciful: "The King trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved". Psalm 47:2 takes up the thought of His power: "For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth". But it is power on which the Psalmist can lay claim: "Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they may be many that fight against me, O thou most High" (Psalm 56:2), and in the next Psalm he says: "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me" (57:2); and this, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

In Psalm 78 the Psalmist warns the people not to be like their fathers, who "sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness" (v. 17). Although "they remembered that God was their rock, and the most High their Redeemer" (v. 35), yet once again (v. 56), "they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies". What a contrast to the favoured one in Psalm 91: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty". Again we have these two thoughts brought together — God the High and Exalted One, and at the same time the All-sufficient One, whom Abram learned to know when all human resources were at an end, "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were". He learned Him as the One who could fulfill all his needs, impossible though this might seem to the natural man. Psalm 91 continues then to develop this trust, in verse 9 (applicable of course in the first place to our blessed Lord Himself, who ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father): "Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling". What a comfort it was to read this very Psalm when the enemy planes were seeking our camp to destroy it, and to be able to rest in the assurance: "No plague shall approach thy tent" (v. 10 in the Dutch Bible).

Psalm 92 tells us that "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, to sing praises unto thy name, O most High". We are encouraged in this Psalm to begin and to end the day with a time of praise, His loving kindness the theme of our morning song, and at night to record His faithfulness. The Psalmist speaks of the wicked, who cannot understand the ways of God, and realises that all this apparent prosperity of those that forget God, is only for time; "but thou, LORD, art most high for evermore" (v. 8). He raises his eyes above the world and all its confusion to Him who is above. We, too, are exhor-

ted to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

In the Prophets

Passing over a single reference in Isaiah for the moment, and over the two references in Lamentations 3 to the most High, we find that the title comes many times in the book of Daniel. It is this book that we find the origin of the expression, "the Kingdom of God", and learn that it is primarily the millennium. Following the destruction of the Roman kingdom in its final phase, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). The most high God is thus God's kingdom name, for, "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (4:17, 25, 32, 34).

Daniel's three friends are described by Nebuchadnezzar as servants of the most High God, a God that could preserve His own in the midst of the fiery furnace; yea, could walk with them in the flames of persecution, for the king beheld One like unto the Son of God walking with them in the fire. This Scripture has been a source of comfort to many persecuted saints since then, confirming the words recorded by Isaiah: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, . . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2). This same blessed One, who speaks of himself as, "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive" (Revelation 2:7), goes on to say to the suffering Christians at Smyrna: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life". "For how will recompense His smile the sufferings of this 'little while'."!

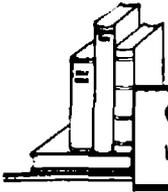
Nebuchadnezzar was a proud character, but he had to learn that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:25). In his pride he ignored the divine warning, and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" In this attitude he was not the first. Lucifer himself, according to Isaiah 14:13ff, said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the most High". Pride, the primeval sin by which Lucifer tempted man, is seen in all men naturally, but their end also resembles Lucifer's. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" This was Nebuchadnezzar's experience. He was turned out into a field to live as a beast, until he recognised that this was a decree from the most High (Daniel 4:24), and also, by inference, that he was the basest of men, and that God had entrusted the kingdom to him in fulfilment of His own purpose. It was a hard lesson for the proud king to learn, but is it less difficult for us, who sometimes have to learn the hard way that "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18)? to say with Job, "Behold, I am vile"?

When Belshazzar came to reign in the place of Nebuchadnezzar, he was reprov'd because he had not learned from his predecessor's experience. Nebuchadnezzar had said, "I thought it good to shew the

signs and wonders that the High God hath wrought toward me", but his successor had to be reminded by Daniel that "the most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour . . . and he was driven from the sons of men, . . . till he knew that the most High God ruled in the kingdom of men" (Daniel 5:18, 21). For Belshazzar the day of grace was over; judgment was already at the gate. We too need to be reminded, as did the Corinthians, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

In the later, prophetic chapters of Daniel, we read an interesting expression, "the saints of the most High (7:18,22,25,27). These favoured ones (so we may translate the word, 'saints') shall take and possess the kingdom for ever and ever; to them judgment is given, and to them, in spite of the ungodly dictator who will speak great words against the most High and wear out His saints, will at last be given the kingdom and dominion. This has an analogy in respect of us too. The apostle, writing to the Corinthians says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2,3). We already have a heavenly portion; we are already citizens of heaven and in Christ we are already seated in the heavenlies. What an honoured position is ours! But the day is coming when all that have shared His reproach here below will share His glory, and so we read in Revelation 20:4 that the saints who suffer death during the period of the great tribulation shall also live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

Hosea mentions the most High twice in his prophecy. In chapter 7 he complains, "They return, but not to the most High". This was the One whom they had despised in the wilderness, and they had still not learned their lesson. In chapter 11:7, He says, "My people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him". When we think that God had just reminded them of all that He had done for them, we marvel at the ingratitude of Israel. In the same chapter we read, "When Israel was a child, I loved him . . . I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love" (11:1,4). Even after the reproach that we have already quoted He says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" Just as Hosea's own wife had proved unfaithful to him, so God's earthly people were abandoning Him for gods that were no gods, the idols of the surrounding nations. Is there a word for us in all this? "Our coldness might fill us with grief and with shame; so much to be loved and so little to love"! Thank God, He will not give us up. We are loved with an everlasting love, but He still has to probe our hearts as He did Peter's. "Lovest thou me?"



(incorporating *Words of Help*)

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART ——— J. S. BLACKBURN

AN arresting description indeed! In the succession of Old Testament phrases joined with the names of outstanding men of God — Enoch “walked with God”, Abraham “the friend of God”, etc. — here is one which surely warrants our pausing to ponder it deeply.

When God had removed Saul from reigning over Israel, “he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, *a man after mine own heart*, which shall fulfil all my will” (Acts 13:22). The narrative is found in 1 Samuel 13:14, “And Samuel said to Saul . . . thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be the captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.”

The beautiful words of our title point in three directions. Firstly, they sharpen the contrast between Saul, the man after the heart of unregenerate man — that is, *man* after the flesh — and David, the man after *God's* heart. Secondly, they furnish a similar contrast with the succeeding kings of David's line. Thirdly, they point upward and onward to “great David's greater Son”, the Man of God's pleasure on a plain infinitely lifted above comparison with the best of men.

It is plain in Scripture that God gave Saul to be Israel's king; but He did it, knowing that the people had rejected *Him* in asking for a king. They asked for a king, “like the nations”. God gave them a king whom *they* had chosen (1 Samuel 8:18). It was the final breakdown of the dispensation, since it was the final rejection of God's direct rule over His people. With David and Solomon, God set up a new thing, the *kingdom*. Henceforward, the nation's fate depended on the behaviour of the king; a system of greatest ultimate blessing under the Messiah. But the first king, Saul, had to utter the epitaph on his own life when he parted from David the last time: “Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly” (1 Samuel 26:21). What will your own verdict on your own life have to be at its end?

In several places Scripture makes explicit the reasons why the heart of God, in such contrast, found satisfaction in David. Let us first note carefully the period of David's life when this description — “a man after mine own heart” — was uttered. It was when David was “but a youth”. He was already a man after God's own heart! Attention, Christian young men! If you are to avoid having to utter Saul's verdict at the end of life, how wise you would be to set your heart, as David did, in youth! Youth

is the time for development, education, and training; there is much to occupy you. But God sees the heart, and it was what He saw in the youth's heart which caused Him to say, "a man after *mine own heart*".

The scene is described in 1 Samuel 16, especially in verses 11 to 13. In verse 1, the Lord is speaking to Samuel, commanding him to fill his horn with oil for a king's anointing. "I have rejected [Saul]", and, "I have provided me a king", among the eight sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite. That David was despised, is shown by his being withheld while seven sons passed before Samuel, without any indication to the prophet that the chosen king had yet appeared. When finally Samuel insists, and David, the youngest son, stands before him, the Lord speaks. "Arise, anoint him: for this is he".

At this point we will note only one further feature in chapter 16: "he keepeth sheep", or, "he is a shepherd". This sentence is of immense significance. It has already become manifest in the Bible narrative, and is to come to expression many times afterwards, that the spirit of the *shepherd* is of great price in God's sight. Doubtless many youths in Israel at that time fulfilled this description, but the spirit in which *this* youth cared for these lowly, silly, but valuable animals, was the explicit factor at this stage which made David God's chosen king, from whom the Messiah sprang. It is never too early in life, among the people of God, to manifest care for the saints.

When the time came for the fight with Goliath (at which point the words occur, "but a youth"), we learn more about David and his sheep. It was when David's willingness to take up Goliath's challenge brought him before Saul that a new factor emerged. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him." It was a secret victory. To gain secret victories is of great importance for Christian youth, and God sees it.

Another pointer to the heart of the youthful David is found in Psalm 132. Verse 8 reveals that the ark is the subject; and the ark symbolises the presence of the Mighty God of Jacob: finding its rest was finding an habitation for God (vv. 5,8). At what stage in David's life did his heart become set on the ark? The answer is in the first sentence of v. 6. It is clearly marked. He heard of it at Ephratah, which was the home of his youth. A major feature of David's reign, even years later, was the continuity of his devotion to the ark, the place where Jehovah met with his assembled people. Such was David's youth. May any young men who read these words be moved to set their hearts for God and His things.

Does the David of later life fulfil this early promise? Yes, indeed! We have God's review of his life referred to several times after his death. Perhaps the most explicit passage is 1 Kings 14:8: "David . . . followed me with all his heart". This frequently repeated pleasure which Jehovah expressed in the completed life of David is little less arresting than our own title. The context shows, in this as in other cases, that the theme prominent in the mind of Jehovah, when He sets David's life in such a light, is idolatry. It comes out in 1 Kings 14 in the verse following that just quoted, in words addressed to Jeroboam (v. 9): "Thou hast gone,

and made thee other gods, and molten images”.

This brings us to the second direction in which our thoughts are turned by the epithet, “a man after God’s own heart”. The kings who succeeded David, beginning with Solomon, are compared with David, as God’s standard for them. By this comparison he brings each reign under review. What are we to think of God’s regular and continued commendation of David’s life and reign, in view of his great sin in the case of Uriah the Hittite? (We do not forget also his sin in numbering the people.) The Scriptures make it clear that David “followed Jehovah with a whole heart”, in the sense that his heart never, from beginning to end of his responsible life, departed from the worship and service of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Here, and here only, his heart — his whole being — was unchangeably fixed (Psalm 108). It was whole, and this was David’s integrity. His great sin was seen by David, under the glare of Jehovah’s word by Nathan, to be totally incompatible with the unalterable setting of his heart on Jehovah. Under the influence of the prophet’s word, David sees that Jehovah is also God “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity”, and he *judges himself*. “Have mercy upon me, O God . . . I acknowledge my transgressions . . . Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:1-4). Then he enjoys the full sense of forgiveness and restoration: “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven . . . Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity . . . Be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice, ye righteous” (Psalm 32).

The wholeness of David’s heart comes out in his vow committing himself to the worship of God. “He sware unto Jehovah, and vowed to the mighty God of Jacob” (Psalm 132:2). When he sinned, he did not ignore it, or maintain his sinful course. He confessed and *judged* his sin, and the same person can truthfully say, in Psalm 16, of the whole tenor of his life, “O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord . . . Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.” Such was the “man after God’s own heart”.

In reading, as we have, Psalm 16, we have come to the point where it becomes manifest that above all, the words of our title look upward and onward to the Lord Jesus, David’s Lord. “Wherever we follow Thee, Lord”, we see the Father’s delight in Thee. Before the worlds are made He is “daily” Jehovah’s delight. His life on earth in obscurity is crowned with, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. In the epistle which views Christ having taken His seat at the right hand of God, His good pleasure is seen in taking His saints into sonship, and in their being “accepted in the beloved”. And thus, from eternity to eternity, “the Father’s full delight is centred in the Son”. To make this truth a staple of our spiritual food, soaking in day by day, and even hour by hour, its beauty and its preciousness in God’s sight, will give substance to our worship, light and power to our pathway, and will deepen, ever deepen, the true fervency with which we say “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”.

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST R. A. CREETH

IT is interesting to notice that in Matthew 12 the supremacy of Christ is emphasised in a threefold way. He declares Himself to be greater than Jonah, greater than the temple and greater than Solomon. This answers to the threefold offices of Prophet, Priest and King.

Greater than Jonah

When the scribes and Pharisees came to the Lord asking for a sign He said to them, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth". This shows clearly that the Lord regarded Jonah's going down into the depths as a foreshadowing of His own impending death. Yet there is this outstanding contrast. Jonah was cast into the waters as a consequence of his sinful rebellion against God. Our Lord voluntarily went down into death to suffer the righteous judgement of God against sin, "for Christ has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Jonah, having passed through this remarkable type of death and resurrection, became God's messenger to the people of Nineveh. Thus he typified the Lord Jesus, who here implies that, being rejected by the nation, He would leave the Jewish people and turn to the Gentiles. This was certainly the case after His death and resurrection. Our Lord goes on to say, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, *behold, a greater than Jonah is here.*"

Indeed, we may say how much greater than Jonah was our blessed Lord! Jonah was a prophet, sent forth by God, but he proved to be a failing, disobedient servant. In wondrous grace the Lord took the place of God's dependent and obedient Servant. His ear was opened morning by morning to receive instructions from His Father (see Isaiah 50:4) and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2).

Jonah was a prophet sent by Jehovah with a message to a Gentile nation, but he was displeased and sought to flee from God's presence. To fit him for His purpose God had to pass him through death and resurrection in a figure, after which he proceeded to Nineveh as God's messenger to the people. As a result of his preaching it is recorded that the people of Nineveh believed God and repented, from the greatest of them to the least of them (Jonah 3:5). Thus they were spared the judgment that had been proclaimed.

Consider now the One who was far greater than Jonah. God's own Son came forth into this world as God's Prophet, His Apostle or Sent One. He was the true and faithful Witness here in this world. He came delighting to do God's will, as He said when here, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). One far greater than Jonah was present on earth, yet His testimony was refused, and Himself rejected and soon to be crucified!

Greater than the Temple

Matthew 12 records that the Lord Jesus and His disciples, being hungry, began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat them. The Pharisees complained to Jesus that His disciples were doing what was not lawful to do on the sabbath day. Our Lord referred them to the case of David and his followers who, when hungry, entered into the house of God and ate the shewbread, which only the priests were allowed to eat. The Lord added, "Have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?"

Thus the Lord rebuked the unbelief of the Pharisees. How came it about that the Lord's anointed in Saul's day was a fugitive, and he and his followers reduced to the point of starvation? It was because God's chosen one was rejected by the people in his day, just as Messiah, a far greater than David, was facing rejection by the unbelieving nation even then. And as to the priests, it was necessary for them to work on the sabbath day, for sacrifices had to be offered because of the people's sin. So according to the law they profaned the sabbath, yet were blameless. Strikingly the Lord adds, "But I say unto you, that in this place is *One greater than the temple*".

Let us consider how much greater than the Temple is our adorable Lord — greater in His person and greater in His work! It has been well said by another that the temple was the place in which God dwelt, the place from which God spoke, and the place at which God was approached. How true all this is of Christ in His superiority over the temple! "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) and in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9); "God has spoken unto us in his Son" (Hebrews 1:2); "Whom God has set forth a mercy-seat [or, meeting place] through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25 New Trans.). It is alone through the atoning sacrifice of God's own Son become man that we can approach God: we can draw near by that new and living way into the presence of God by the blood of Jesus. Thus One greater than the temple has procured for us what the Jewish temple could never provide — liberty of approach to God. He is both Sacrifice and Priest. Therefore, having now an high priest over the house of God, we may draw near in full assurance of faith into the very holiest of all (Hebrews 10:19-22). And because of His continuing for ever, with an unchangeable priesthood, He is able to save completely those who approach by Him to God (Hebrews 7:24-25 New Trans.). Is He not infinitely greater than the temple in the glory of His person, in the efficacy of His atoning work and His priestly service?

Greater than Solomon

In our chapter the Lord Jesus is declaring that God would turn to the Gentiles in face of Israel's rejection of their Lord and Messiah. In support of this He refers first to the case of the men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, and then to the case of the Queen of Sheba, also a Gentile, who "came from the uttermost parts of the earth

to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, *behold, a greater than Solomon is here*".

Such was the ardour of the queen of the south that she undertook the tremendous journey from her home in southern Arabia with diligent determination to hear for herself the wisdom of king Solomon. Yet a greater than Solomon was now present, and wisdom was there in Him far greater than that of the wise and great king in Jerusalem. But alas, the "evil and adulterous generation" of the Lord's day saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him: they did not recognise in Him the Wisdom of God and the true King of Israel.

We can be assured that in spite of Israel's rejection of their Messiah, all God's purposes concerning His Son and the blessing of this earth will be accomplished, as He has declared in Psalm 2:6, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion". And can we not see in the visit of the Gentile queen to the court of king Solomon a picture of the nations by and by, who with a similar desire and purpose of heart will go up to Jerusalem to pay homage to the Anointed King of our God, whose wisdom and glory will characterise the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Solomon? The wisdom of the Lord's Anointed in that day and the glory of His kingdom, will far exceed that which attracted the queen of the south. For a greater than Solomon will be there, and every knee shall bow to Him in that day of His universal supremacy. Surely it is our privilege to bow the knee to Him now in this day of His rejection, and to rejoice in the knowledge of His supremacy as Prophet, Priest and King.

THE DANGER OF PRIDE AND THE NEED FOR LOWLINESS ————— A. H. RULE [1882]

I BELIEVE we need to keep the body of Christ before us, and seek to build up the saints simply as belonging to *that*, wherever they may be found. Alas! we know how the saints are scattered, but love seeks them out, and seeks to minister to them, because they are Christ's. I find it very easy to sink down into a kind of sectarian spirit, while the ground may be held intellectually clear enough. It is easy to be seeking to build up something that is for man's eye. May the Lord keep us from having our hearts set on anything but *that* which He loves — the Church for which He gave Himself.

How true it is that apart from Him we can do nothing. And have we not much lacked the sense of dependence on Him? And instead of pursuing the lowly path of Him who could say, "I am a worm and no man," we have thought ourselves to be something, and exalted ourselves — alas! only to be abased. But how much better mercy that He should abase us now, than allow us to go on in pride of heart! He brings us low that He may lift us in the sense of His own wonderful grace. I have thought that perhaps many of us have not sufficiently realised the *utter ruin* of all that has been committed to man's responsibility. We have spoken and written of the ruin of the Church, while secretly in our own hearts we are priding ourselves that at least there was one little circle

where all was right, and we are in that. It is a kind of Brethrenism.

Of course, God's Word and truth change not, and it ever remains true that where two or three are gathered to Christ's name there He is "in the midst" of them. The truth is as simple, and the path as plain as ever it was, and thus there is ever a resource for faith. But if pride is lurking in our hearts, thinking we are all right, and that "Brethren" are a kind of asylum into which the people of God are to be gathered, where they can be in safe keeping, and cared for till the Lord comes, surely that is not learning well the truth of the Church's ruin. And has there not been more of this than perhaps we are aware of? And therefore God is allowing us to learn the ruin of the Church among ourselves, as well as our folly in setting up to be anything. Oh! may we learn the lesson well, that Christ may become everything to us, not only an object of our hearts individually, but the centre to which we gather, and the One who can never fail, but who, in spite of the Church's failure, and even of apostasy which threatens everything, "is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy".

THE LAST ENEMY

COLIN CURRY

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26)

The writer has been asked to pass on messages at burial services with alarming frequency in recent years, and this has brought with it a special sense of sharing in the heavy losses of this kind which many of the Lord's people face. A falling back on the Scriptural teaching about death eases the burden, without minimising the sadness which believers feel in these experiences; and our whole readership may find some comfort and encouragement from an article which arises in this way.

One of C. S. Lewis's early books, "The Pilgrim's Regress", follows the allegorical style of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". The pilgrim in Lewis's book, John, through many experiences arrived in the end at real personal Christian belief. He started out from an environment where a strict orthodox religious adherence was the norm. In his home area the existence of "the Landlord" was acknowledged; and the Landlord's "rules" were respected, though followed in a somewhat nominal way. His relatives subscribed to an empty and joyless religious code, and were glad to escape as much as possible into their own concerns. John as a youngster was puzzled by the beliefs of his peers, and found much that disquieted him, and much that he could not understand.

Near the opening of the book, one striking section shows the attitude of John's family to death. One day John comes in from the garden to find his elders greatly upset. His Uncle John, a somewhat disreputable person, has been given "notice to quit" by the Landlord. There follows an account of the departure of Uncle John. The whole family accompanies him down to the brook in the valley; he crosses over and begins to climb the slope on the other side, towards the Landlord's castle, and soon they lose sight of him. John is mystified by the conduct of the family throughout the whole incident. All of them put on masks, with a fixed and solemn countenance, hiding their real feelings

about Uncle John's impending departure. Uncle John is also given a mask, but it tends to come off, and John sees the real fear and horror that is there. After Uncle John has gone, they all return home, remove their masks, and begin talking about the disposal of Uncle John's prize pigs and other matters.

The reaction to death shown by many people is well captured here. It is a graphic picture of the inevitability of death, the way it disturbs our composure in life, the mixture of attempted fortitude and real unease shown by human beings when it comes close to them. It illustrates the widespread sense of inability to meet death, the desire to shelve the issues it raises, to turn away and hide from its reality. It shows the absence of true hope amongst those who have only a nominal faith. True, some individuals are able to adopt the humanistic ideal of facing death with calm resignation and courage; but it is doubtful whether the full gravity of death is fairly understood by such persons.

Though death is a grievous reality to the true Christian, how different is his approach to it! He certainly feels its heavy weight, but does so without assuming a mere pretence of fortitude. He can face death squarely, not underestimating it, nor being over-brave about it, but with a strength that comes from Christ, and with a firm and well-based hope. Death brings sorrow and loss; it casts a dark shadow indeed; it is a strong and adverse foe. But to the believer it is also a *defeated* foe, soon to be destroyed. He has the answer to it; he has the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, a consideration of the biblical teaching about human death will certainly find grave matters which need to be discussed. But there is also a brighter side to the same theme. While we must not underplay the darkness of the shadow that death casts over the whole human race, the triumph of Christ over death, when he used death as the very means of overcoming death, is a glorious part of the same subject-matter. As believers, we share in our Lord's overwhelming victory, and must not fail to dwell on the lofty side of the teaching too. We shall begin then with the dark aspects of human death, and pass later to the marvellous truth that death as a foe has been routed, and especially we must think of the manner and the finality of Christ's conquest over it.

A dark shadow; a formidable foe

From our own intuitive reactions when death strikes close to us, we know that death brings disquiet and great distress. Scripture amply confirms that this is the proper reaction. We may perhaps best learn how awful a matter death is from our Lord's sensitivity to it. Bearing in mind the scenes at the tomb of Lazarus, and at the garden of Gethsemane, the horror of death surely cannot be belittled. Neither bravado nor stoicism in its presence is at all suitable, if He is our guide. The weeping along with Martha and Mary, the inward groaning and trouble, though partly arising from His entire sympathy with them, was also His reaction to the appalling impasse into which humankind had sunk. His strong crying and tears in the garden bear witness to what death really is. It is true that He had far more to face at that dark crisis than any other man. Yet

the existence of death in the world is the result of human sin, and death is the common lot of men because sin is universal; and facing the issues of human sin is horrible beyond description, because sin is such a sinister and gross matter. It would be well if every man could realise this. But our Lord, pure and sinless Himself, was facing those issues in order to meet them to the full carrying them on behalf of others, including ourselves. Small wonder then that He recoiled from such a prospect, but amazing indeed that His Father's will was the dominant pressure upon Him still.

Let us marvel then that our Lord stood alongside the mourners, joining them in their grief at the death of another. Let us be further astonished that He has been amongst the dead too, a great step further than just joining the mourners. "He tasted death", the writer says, and who can tell what a dark and bitter experience that was? Let us never think that because He had that unique ability to cope with these dreadful experiences, they were somehow less of a burden to Him. Death is not a matter to be trifled with, or treated as nothing, even though He vanquished it. His own death, in particular, had an abyss of dark experience in it, enough to make us always sober with the sense of the gravity of human sin and death.

A further grim aspect of the nature of death is its total grip on humanity. "Death passed upon all men, for all have sinned". Death "reigns" everywhere, like a tyrant (Romans 5:12-14). "It is appointed unto men once to die", and, apart from Christ, judgment follows. Death is the consequence, the penalty, the symptom and the harvest of sin. It is so in the broad sense, and for each person separately. Men are completely weak and impotent in the face of death. A sinful person is, in a certain sense, already dead, though physical death is still ahead. He knows nothing about "life in Christ Jesus". Living in sin, living in pleasure, living apart from God, is to be dead while one lives (see Ephesians 1:1-5; 1 Timothy 5:6).

Thus, the power of death is in every sense strong indeed, and men are in bondage to its vice-like grip. It is the last and greatest enemy, next to the Adversary himself. Without Christ's deliverance it is greatly to be feared, though the devil has his way of keeping men unconscious of their plight. The bible fully recognises that death is a tremendous weapon in the Enemy's hands, holding men in fetters and in fear. But it also indicates that God sets bounds on his usage of it. Satan was allowed to take Job into unbelievably harrowing trials, but not to touch his life. Satan uses all his opportunities against God as exhaustively as he can, and his power is fearfully great, but it is *not* unlimited. Death is Satan's weapon, but God has overruled him in the very use of that weapon. *Through death* our Lord has destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered those who (otherwise) had much cause to fear it.

A final point may be made about the grim and forbidding nature of death. Nothing could be more forbidding than the expulsion of fallen man from paradise, and the flaming sword turning every way, guarding the way of the tree of life. How true God was to His word, that disobedience would lead to death, and how hollow and false was the serpent's questioning of it. Yet the firmness of God's action, forbidding access to life, insisting on man's return to the ground from whence he

came was mercy to him in disguise: Man fallen, but allowed access to the tree of life, would have been beyond redemption. To forbid it was to open the door for reclaiming man through Christ. How like God it is, that He has given us bright gleams of light even amongst the darkest themes we can consider!

The power of death broken; its sting drawn

We have noted the strong biblical emphasis on the gravity and power of death. But there are many passages (in the New Testament particularly) which set it alongside our Lord's mightier action in undoing its power, quenching and disarming it in a totally overwhelming way. In some of these places death looks almost a small thing in the face of the all-conquering Person Who has overpowered it. Consider, for instance, the almost contemptuous way in which Peter speaks of death in the light of our Lord's resurrection; "It was not possible the *He* should be holden of *it* [death]" (Acts 2:24). Think of that grand statement: "Our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . has abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). The force of the word "abolished" is really "nullified", or perhaps "quashed". A similar splendid statement is in Revelation chapter 1, that He "has the keys of death and of Hades". Being raised from the dead, "death has no more dominion over Him" (Romans 6:9): the reverse is the truth, He has total authority and control over death, and all that lies beyond. How moving is the truth that Scripture presents to us here: "By man [Adam] came death, by man [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21). Man in his failure dishonoured God, and it entailed great loss to himself. Disobedience and rebellion brought unavoidable death and judgment. But another Man faced death, not unavoidably, but willingly, in humility and total obedience, in perfect submission to that utmost point, "even the death of the cross". What immense and excellent glory centres on the dark scene of the death of our blessed Lord. He has turned death into a place where God was glorified, into a place of triumph, and the complete sweeping aside of every adversary! Like Goliath, the Enemy has been despatched with his own weapon. Captivity has been led captive, and release and freedom have come to those who receive the benefit of that sublime act of sacrifice and love. Divine love has proved itself stronger than death. The strong point of the Enemy's opposition to God has been the pivot of God's counter-action against him!

So we pass to that other view of death that believers can take. When Christians are parted by death, there is grief because strong ties are broken, and the losses are felt deeply. But these sorrows are greatly softened by hope in Christ and a confidence that He has complete mastery over death and the grave. The figure of "sleep" is used in Scripture (by our Lord too) to describe what death is to one who trusts Him. To call it, "sleep", suggests the harmlessness of death, the quietude and absence of fear in approaching it; it implies its temporary nature. The New Testament is also very clear that death is in no way a terminus, but it is a *gateway*, a *translation* from one area to another.

Though it is a departure, it is also an arrival. To depart to be with Christ is far better; it is to be absent from the body, but at home with the Lord.

Again (though for present-day believers physical death may yet be ahead) in a certain sense faith in Christ brings about this transition already. Faith in Him, here and now, is a passage beyond condemnation, a passage from death unto life; it brings eternal life now (John 5:24). Our condemnation has been borne by Him who died *for* us. In His death we see our death, already behind us; we died *with* Him. Our life in the area where sin reigns unto death has already ceased; we live in a realm where God is known and served. Faith grasps these great truths, and lives in correspondence with them (see Romans 6-8). The death of Christ has cleared us already from judgment; but it has also broken the shackles of sin, and set us free to live under the control of His grace. What additional causes these are, for awareness that Christ has brought *positive* good out of death, terminating our old life in sin by removing it in death, setting us free in newness of life, to live and to wait for Him!

“There shall be no more death”

Finally, the quotation at the head of this paper envisages the full realisation of the triumph of Christ. The whole of 1 Corinthians 15 speaks about *bodily* resurrection. Our Lord's victory over death involves not only His own resurrection, though that is the first fruits of all that will follow. But it involves the bodily resurrection of every single human being. They are to be raised, “every man in his own order”. Following His own resurrection, next in order will be the believing dead, “those that are Christ's, at His coming”. Believers still alive at that great moment will join them, all transformed to the likeness of His own body of glory. He has the power to effect this even as He is able to subdue all things to Himself; and His own resurrection is the guarantee of it (see Philippians 3:21, as well as 1 Corinthians 15). Last of all, and later still resurrection to judgment will be part of that process of asserting God's rule. We are left in no doubt that resurrection of the unbelieving dead will complete the whole sequence, as far as humankind is concerned. Our Lord's own words are quite clear about this (John 5:28, 29). All that are in the graves shall come forth. Revelation 20:11-15 is equally clear, and very solemn. Unsparing but fair judgment will be their lot.

But our present verse says primarily that death will be altogether a thing of the past; it will finally be destroyed. *Then* the saying will come to pass “Death is swallowed up in victory”. Our Lord's triumph will be complete and absolute. For some there is no hope in this sketch of future prospects. How urgently we should act as intercessors today, before this destiny is sealed for such people. But for ourselves, who through grace alone are to have our part in “the first resurrection”, and are soon to be “for ever with the Lord” (complete in body, soul and spirit), what thankfulness should always mark us. How we should re-echo the words “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ”. Still more than this, we should look forward to the day of total victory for our Lord's own sake, who won the battle singlehanded, and in such manner as to call for a heartfelt response to Him, beginning now and continuing for evermore.

THE LORD'S COMING IN 1 PETER ————— JOHN BARNES

IN an earlier article on the second coming of the Lord Jesus* reference was made to the Epistles of Peter and to the fact that God's government is a prominent feature of them. The coming of the Lord is also much in the writer's thoughts and, just as in the case of government, the first epistle views the subject as in favour of the saints while the second also brings forward the matter of the judgement of the Lord's enemies. In this first epistle there appear to be three main references to the Lord's return.

- (i) 1:6-13, where *salvation* is the subject.
- (ii) 4:11-13, where *suffering* is the subject.
- (iii) 5:1-4, where *shepherding* is the subject.

In each of these instances events yet future are brought to bear on present conditions, for the encouragement of the saints.

Salvation

This wonderful word is used three times in chapter one (vv. 5, 9, 10). Peter refers in v. 4 to the saints' inheritance and to how it is reserved, or guarded, for them in heaven. In the following verse he goes on to point out that they, in turn, are guarded on earth that they may be preserved to enjoy the blessings of the inheritance. Both of these verbs seem to convey the thought of guarding. Some students adopt the view that the first of them means, to guard an object, such as a treasure, in case it should be taken away (e.g. stolen), while the second word means, to guard a person lest he should take himself off (e.g. apostatise). The Lord Jesus has made this complete provision for the saints. Our inheritance cannot be forfeited either by the evil activities of our enemies or even by our own folly. *He* looks after everything and we are kept by the power of God through faith.

The future aspect of the blessing He has for us is here called *salvation*. This great and comprehensive expression has a present application, as we shall consider shortly, but Peter sets before us firstly its future bearing. He writes, "It is ready to be revealed". Surely we may understand from this phrase that no detail of the work remains to be accomplished to bring this work to completion. It is wholly done. No doubt certain events were to run their course between the time of writing and the still future unveiling — indeed, more than 1900 eventful years — but the work itself is complete. It will be revealed in God's time.

This gives the believer a bright and certain hope, but all is not projected into the distant future. What God has stored up for the saints in cloudless days to come is available for them to enter into in spirit in the often dark days of the present time. Peter assures those tried believers of Asia Minor that they had already received the salvation of their souls. The thought of support through present griefs seems to be a feature of the present salvation, and enables the saints to "hope with perfect steadfastness in the grace that will be brought to them at the revelation of

* Vol. 46 (November 1979), p. 278.

Jesus Christ.” In that splendid day of glory when the saints will be with Him in the unhindered delights of those scenes of heavenly joy, the drawbacks and trials of today will seem as nothing. If we can, in any degree, touch those things now this will be the effect, without a doubt. “While we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen. . . .”

Suffering

Meanwhile the sufferings are real. In our Western world we are spared much of the fierceness of these trials, but many suffer terribly. Peter uses the words “fiery trial”, which suggest intense and severe suffering, something we know little of. If, however, we do suffer as Christians in any way, we are not to suppose that it is a strange phenomenon. It is indeed perfectly normal. If we had some brand of religion which was wholly free from suffering we would be warranted in questioning the reality of what we had. In the verses we have looked at in chapter one we read of “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow”. The one preceded the other as the night the day. In each of these scriptures we are looking at, a similar thought is introduced (1:11, 4:13, 5:1). In this section the believers are thought of as having a share in these sufferings and are exhorted to rejoice in the favour of it, with the eternal joy before them. First the trials, then the glory; the sufferings, then the joy. The joy that is set before the Christian in this context is intended to promote joy in the present circumstances of pressure.

We are not, therefore, to consider present griefs incongruous but to understand them as the normal pattern of events in the Christian life, for griefs characterised our Lord's earthly pathway, and His present glory was the consequence. Glory with the Lord Jesus in the day of His manifestation will certainly be our portion, but even in today's circumstances there is glory for those who suffer as Christians. Peter says, “The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” “Rests” suggests the idea of touching without weight. In our present conditions the “weight of glory” we shall bear would probably crush us. The glory Peter speaks of here touches us, as perhaps printers' type touches the paper, and leaves an impression without damaging the frail material it is imprinted on. So the Spirit of glory may rest on the saints today, leaving impressions, or touches, of glory, enabling them to glorify God in a wholly hostile environment, as the glory of the dawning day touches the peaks of the hills with its radiant beams while the lower reaches still lie in darkness.

Shepherding

The Lord has set us together with His people. Various figures are used to express aspects of this truth; here the figure of a flock is used. The saints are “God's flock”. No man has rights over them; they belong to God and those whom He Himself has fitted, who by grace have grown a little in “the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”,

may be able to offer some help to the sheep. Here again, as we have already seen, the sufferings of Christ and His coming glory are referred to. Peter had been a witness of the sufferings and was a partaker of the glory. As we know he had been closely associated with the Lord Jesus in His suffering and death and he had also been one of the favoured three who saw a preview of the glory up in the holy mount. It is with the glory in mind that he writes of the care of God's flock.

Partaking of glory imposes obligations. Any favour carries responsibilities with it. Those who have reached any measure of maturity in the things of God have some sense of this. Whatever has been committed to any believer is for God's service, so Peter urges the elders to have a sense of obligation in the service of the flock. The glory ahead is certain, but meanwhile the sheep are exposed to dangers. The word "feed" is better rendered, "shepherd" (New Trans.) for it includes all that may be done for the sheep by a shepherd. This will include finding suitable pasture but has other things in mind also. Sheep require a good deal of attention and those who are mature are urged to undertake these responsibilities, readily, willingly, humbly, their own lives being examples to others.

The Chief Shepherd will soon appear. The day of His universal glory will soon dawn for Him but He does not propose to shine alone in His splendour. He will bring the saints into it with Him that they may have part in it. What a favour to be in that radiant scene! Those who, today, without thought of remuneration or position, simply devote themselves to the care of God's flock have this assurance that, when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, their work will not be forgotten. They will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Whatever awards men may receive for work done in and for this world, bring delights that do not last long. This crown will never lose its brilliance.

The sufferings of the Lord Jesus and the glory that is about to be revealed are much before the mind of the writer. He brings the brethren, too, into the current of his thought. In 1:7 he writes of the trial of their faith and of the severe nature of their sufferings at that time ("tried with fire") but he goes on to link this directly with the glory to come. "Praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ". Then, right at the close of his letter (5:10) he breaks into prayer, "The God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect . . ." Throughout, Peter sees the glory through the sufferings. The glory suffers no damage from being seen through the sufferings, but how the sufferings are transfigured by being seen in the light of the glory!

PART TWO: THE NEW TESTAMENT

IN the New Testament references to the “most High” are fewer, but their kingdom associations are equally plain. Nevertheless, they have a present application, and that in respect of our behaviour, as we shall see.

When the angel came to Mary to announce the Saviour’s birth, he said that she would bring forth a son, and should call His name Jesus. He would be great, and would be called the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32 — the name is the same as that translated “most High” in other New Testament texts). “What is his name”, enquired Agur, in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, “and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?”. What was concealed from the Old Testament believers was revealed to a humble remnant in the New Testament.

This blessed One, who was to be born of the virgin, was none other than the Son of God. God the Creator had come to dwell among men. When Mary asked the angel, “How shall this be?”, she received from him wonderful confirmation of this fact. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). So the power that overshadowed the favoured handmaid was the power of the most High, the power of the Possessor of heaven and earth. “With God nothing shall be impossible” (v. 37).

How shall we ever fathom the depths of this wondrous mystery? “God was manifest in flesh.” In this light too we may interpret Zacharias’ words when, his dumb lips opened, he prophesied of his son, John “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord . . .” Surely none could be so highly favoured as this! There was indeed no prophet as great as John, said the Lord Himself, and yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

A wider scene is in view in Acts 7, but the same Person. Stephen, accused of speaking words “against this holy place [i.e. the Jerusalem temple] and the law”, concluded his defence with the words, “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord” (Acts 7:48-9). He who possesses heaven and earth, and who shall do so one day in a manner that no living creature will be able to ignore, chose to dwell in a human body in the world He had called into being.

Stephen’s address has a sovereignty of things earthly and heavenly in view. A further sovereignty is indicated in Luke 8:28, where the demons said, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?” Similarly, the woman with the unclean spirit who followed Paul and Silas in Philippi cried out, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). A day will come when every knee shall bow, of things heavenly, earthly *and infernal*. And even now, as James tells us, the devils believe, and tremble.

We reserve till last a reference with a searching application to *our* behaviour. In Luke, chapter six, we read the words of the Lord Jesus to them that heard Him (v. 35). "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."

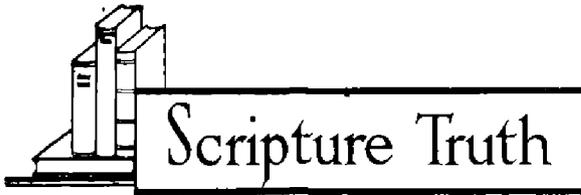
We have to read these words carefully to understand what our Lord was saying. First of all, He was speaking to "you which hear". At the beginning of this discourse we read that (v. 17) He stood in the plain, with His disciples and a great multitude of people from Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, who *came to hear Him* and to be healed of their diseases. Then he lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and spoke these words. By following Him, by hearing His words and obeying them, by faith in His Person, these were children of God. John says the same in his Gospel. "As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the [children] of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

Just as earthly children bear a resemblance to their earthly parents, so do the children of the most High show family characteristics. These are forgiveness, grace to the undeserving, kindness, and forbearance, and many others. But even the children of God need to be reminded of the conduct that becomes their noble birth. In the Epistles, we read the same exhortations that the Lord Jesus gave His disciples when on earth, and on the same ground: not that the readers might become children of the Highest, but because they *were*, by grace, His children.

In our first reference to the "most High" (Genesis 14:18-19), we read of One who was "Possessor of heaven and earth". In the day to come, when this is made manifest, we shall have our place as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ", for this, according to Romans 8:17, is the exalted status of the children of God. Paul could say of himself, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10), whilst to the believers who read his letter he could say, "All things are yours . . . and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21, 23).

ISRAEL ON PASSOVER NIGHT ——— C. E. STUART [1877]

TO revel in the prospect of desolation, uncertain of deliverance, is the act of a fool; but to eat when divine wrath is to be poured out, becomes the man of faith. Observe, it was not *their* estimate of the blood that barred the entrance of the destroyer. "When *I* see the blood," the Lord had said. Who amongst them knew what it spoke of? So with souls now. To wait till we can fully estimate [the precious blood of Christ] will be to wait for ever, but to be saved at all, to be saved *now*, there is needed only the obedience of faith.



JULY, 1980

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

THE SOUND OF THE SILVER TRUMPETS ——— T. TYSON

Numbers 10:1-10

These few verses are full of practical instruction to us if we look at them carefully. At the end of chapter 9 we find the tabernacle reared up and the principle established that the people's journeyings or encampments were governed entirely by the movement of the cloud. Between the last verse of chapter 9 and verse 11 of chapter 10 (when they make their first journey from Sinai to Paran) we read the instructions for the manufacture and use of the two silver trumpets. For this reason we believe that the silver trumpets speak of God's direction and ordering of the movements of his people.

Let us notice that they were to be made of one piece, reminding us that God speaks with one voice at all times, to all peoples, in all circumstances. His revelation of Himself and of His purposes has developed but never contradicted anything previously revealed. The message of both Old and New Testament hangs together in one: God's answer to the question of sin for His glory through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The comparison of a few verses from the Old and New Testaments serves to illustrate this:

"Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22; cp. Leviticus 17:11).

"The just shall live by faith" (Habbakuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

"Be ye holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

"The Gospel of God which He had promised before by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2).

Let us now consider the use of the trumpets. Every movement of the children of Israel was to be in accord with their sound. We can state that the trumpets governed (1) their *worship*, (2) their *walk*, (3) their *warfare*, (4) their *welfare*.

So it should be with us. Our whole Christian life, individual or collective is not left to our own ideas; it is not left to tradition, to convenience, or to novelty, but must be regulated always and only by the sound of the trumpet, that is, by the testimony from God Himself in His Word.

1. Worship

(We take the word *worship* in its widest sense.) The trumpets were used to call the assembly together. In the New Testament there are at least four calls to come together.

Firstly, *to remember the Lord*. Acts 20:7 — “upon the first day of the week when the disciples were come together to break bread”. Their objective was to remember the Lord. It was not even to listen to the ministry of Paul (though he was present and did speak to them at length later); they came together with the primary thought of remembering the Lord. In the passage in 1 Corinthians 11, speaking of the Lord’s supper, the phrase *come together* occurs five times. Have we obeyed the sweet notes of the silver trumpets calling us to “do this in remembrance of me”?

Secondly, the call to “come together” is for *edification*. In 1 Corinthians 14 the emphasis is on that which is profitable for the edifying of the church, as Paul exhorts (v. 12), “that ye may excel to the edifying of the church”. Two verses in this chapter bring a special appeal to us along the line we are considering:

(i) “If therefore the *whole* church be come together into one place” (v. 23). Whenever there is a meeting of the assembly for worship, prayer, edification, etc., it is the responsibility of each of us if at all possible to be there. “The whole church into *one* place.” While there certainly is a place for special activities for young people, for women, or other particular groups, let us be careful to bear in mind that the real objective for the assembly is for all to be gathered together in one place. This is the pathway to a united, healthy assembly life. Gospel outreach work, Sunday School, young people’s groups, camps, etc., depend on entirely different considerations, and nothing said is intended to discourage such valuable work; where however it is a question of those in the church, the *whole church in one place* is the norm. In Numbers 10 a blast on one trumpet called the elders. Two trumpets called everybody. There were no other calls for particular groups.

(ii) 1 Corinthians 14:26 reads, “How is it then brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation . . .” Paul has to appeal for order and decency to regulate this over-enthusiasm. Sadly, one wonders whether the opposite injunction might not be more often required nowadays: “How is it, when ye come together, *not one of you* hath . . .”? Let everyone be ready to use the gift that God has given us to edify one another. It is a sad reflection on our spiritual state if, when we come into the Lord’s presence we have nothing to contribute.

Thirdly, the call to “come together” is for *prayer*. “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 4:31). How desperately we need to know the power of prayer that can shake the place and fill us with Holy Spirit power! The only way to know it is to set ourselves to give Him the absolute authority and priority in our lives, individually and collectively.

Fourthly, there is a call to come together in relation to the *gospel*. Peter went in with Cornelius "and found many that were come together" (Acts 10:27). What a gospel opportunity! Do we not long for occasions like that? They were an expectant company, just ready and open to hear the word: "Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (v. 33). Why does it not happen like that nowadays? It did not "just happen" then either! Go back to verse 24. Cornelius had "called together his kinsmen and near friends", and because of his previous life and testimony amongst them (see v. 2) they had come. Cornelius had "blown the trumpet".

2. Walk

The second main use of the trumpets was to order the marching — the walk — of God's people. I would like to illustrate this in the life of the apostle Paul. Please read 2 Corinthians 1:12-22, where we have Paul *listening* for the trumpet, and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, where we find Paul *sounding* the trumpet.

Paul's listening springs from his rule of conduct, as spelled out in 1:12. "In simplicity and godly sincerity . . . we have had our conversation [or, behaved ourselves] in the world." Or, as he says elsewhere, "For me to live is Christ". Paul lived for one purpose alone, and that was to glorify Christ and do His will whatever the cost.

Like all of us, Paul had to make plans for his future movements. He had intended to pay the Corinthians another visit, but had been forced to alter his plans, and some were accusing him of fickleness. In 1:15 we read, "And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before . . . Did I use lightness?" That is, do I say one thing and do another? Paul was listening for the trumpet and, as it did not sound, he did not move. This was more important to him than the criticisms of men. However much he may be misunderstood, however puzzling the pathway may appear, Paul had a glorious resting place where all was absolutely secure. "All the promises of God in him [the Son of God, Jesus Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (vv. 19-20).

In 2 Corinthians 2:14 (mg.) we read of "God, who always leadeth us in triumph". Paul is still listening. You can only lead those who are willing to follow. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). But in these verses we also get Paul's *sounding* the trumpet, under a different metaphor. His testimony was, to God, a sweet savour of Christ. It was like the sweet notes of the silver trumpets blown over the burnt offering (Numbers 10:10).

To the perishing Paul sounded an alarm, a smell of death unto death (v. 16), warning them of the consequences of rejecting Christ and continuing in their sins. To the saved he sounded the silvery notes of redemption, life unto life, reminding them of the wondrous realm of blessing into which they had been brought through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

3. Warfare

Let us notice that it is “war on your land” (Numbers 10:9) to which the trumpets summoned. This reminds us of the exhortation in Ephesians 6:10ff, to put on “the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand . . .” It is interesting to notice that in these verses in Ephesians the whole description of the enemy is contained between the two exhortations to “put on the whole armour of God”. That armour is sufficient to meet every onslaught. God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”, and brought us into the “land of pure delights”. The enemy tries to rob us of the enjoyment of this, to prevent us from possessing our possessions. In the physical sense the Israelites would put on the armour, but they also had to blow an alarm with the trumpets. “And ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies” (Numbers 10:9). Let us not forget to blow the trumpet. Ephesians 6:18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”.

*In the heavenlies see that land
Satan would thine entrance stay:
Thou against his wiles must stand
Watch and pray.*

4. Welfare

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings . . .” (Numbers 10:10). We might say that their crises and their calendar were under the sound of the trumpet. This brings us to the very practical consideration as to where we find our joy and cause of rejoicing. Where do we turn in trouble or distress? How do we regulate our diary? We cannot do more than quote a few verses from James to illustrate these features. Of the “day of your gladness”, he says, “Is any merry? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). “Rejoice in the Lord alway” (Philippians 4:4). Of the “solemn days”, James says, “Is any afflicted? Let him pray”. “Comfort ye one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Of “the beginnings of your months”, he says, “Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this, or that” (James 4:15). So it should be with us. Our whole life in every detail should be governed by the testimony of God in His Word, brought home to us in the power of the Spirit until

The Trumpet Sounds

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God: and the

dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

No more warfare, no more marching in the wilderness, no more solemn days, for all will be days of gladness — "for ever with the Lord". The last great assembling shout — not just the priests blowing the trumpets, but God, the Lord Himself calling the final glorious "Come together". And for ever *all the church will be together in one place* with the Lord

SHADOWS OF THE SAVIOUR ————— GORDON KELL

1. ISAAC'S DEVOTION

TO project a shadow you need light, an object, and a surface.

God is light, and He has a supreme object: His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as God the Father contemplated the moment when Jesus would glorify Him in this world by His perfect sacrifice upon the cross, He projected shadows which fell, in all their beauty and power, on to the pages of the Old Testament. The four most striking of these shadows are:

1. *Isaac* in his *devotion* to Abraham at Mount Moriah.
2. *Joseph* in his *sufferings* at the hands of his brothers.
3. *The Passover Lamb* in its *sacrifice* for the people of Israel in Egypt.
4. *David* in his *victory* over Goliath.

Let us begin by looking at the first "shadow of the Saviour" — *Isaac*. The account is to be found in Genesis 22:1-14.

"Abraham!"

It is a mark of the grace of God that, even in this poignant story of Isaac's devotion to Abraham, He shows us how He deals with His children and looks for their response by faith and obedience.

"God did tempt Abraham," says the *Authorised Version* (v. 1), where it should say, "God did test Abraham". What is the difference? The devil tempts in order to destroy our lives. God tests in order to build up. This is why God expects *Abraham's* response in *our* lives: "Abraham rose up early . . . and went" — where God told him to go (v. 3). Such simplicity of faith needs no explanation.

"*Take now . . .*" The speed at which Abraham obeys God sometimes causes us to overlook the deep sense he had of the sacrifice he was prepared to make.

Notice the deliberate emphasis God makes as He speaks to His "friend" (v. 2). Every word was weighed by Abraham's heart: "Take

now thy son, thine only son". Not Ishmael the bondwoman's son, for whom Abraham pleaded with God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee" (17:18). No, it was Isaac, the son God gave him through Sarah his true and beloved wife when all hope of a child had naturally disappeared, and the son who had now become the object of their united love. Yes, Abraham obeyed God in the full realisation of the sacrifice he journeyed to make. And in this way God impresses upon the human heart a measure of what it cost Him to sacrifice Jesus.

"*Wait here.*" In verses 3-5 we have a remarkable picture of Christ's public ministry. The journey took three days; the Lord spent three years travelling through Israel. During this time He displayed to His disciples (to whom the servants correspond) that He was One with the Father. "Have I been so long time with you, yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

But then came the moment when the disciples could go no further. "And [ye] shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me" (John 16:32).

"My Father!"

The final part of the journey had begun. Can we imagine the fulness of the heart of God as He led that old man and young child to Moriah? How His heart must have looked forward to the time when He would go with the Lord Jesus to the place of sacrifice!

The wood was placed upon Isaac, just as the Lord bore His cross until relieved by Simeon. Abraham took the fire — always representing divine judgment, and the knife — the messenger of death. "And they went both of them together" (v. 6).

The "oneness" of the Father and the Son passes understanding. But contemplate for a moment the trial, the mocking, the spitting, and the violence which the Lord Jesus suffered, and know that He was in fellowship with the Father through it all! Listen to His opening words upon the cross, "Father, forgive them . . ." And His final expression, "Father, into thy hands . . ."

Here is the true burnt offering — the Son, in complete devotion to the Father, and out of humiliation bringing forth *glory!*

"*Where is the Lamb?*" When Jesus fell on His face in the garden of Gethsemane and the full weight of the cross bore in upon Him with such force that it produced agony and a bloody sweat, He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39). Isaac had looked for a lamb (v. 7), and it was God Himself who provided a "ram caught in a thicket" (v. 13). But Jesus was "the Lamb of God". There was no-one to stand in His place, no-one to hold back the terrible judgment. And so He adds those blessed words: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt". Complete submission! Here Isaac portrays the Lord Jesus wonderfully. He did not run away, did not struggle, did not plead. He submitted to his father's will with complete confidence.

God spared Isaac. The contrast is to be found in Romans 8:32. The father and son had been tested, and their faith shone. It must be said that Hebrews 11:19 records that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, had he needed to slay him. This is a fitting comment when we consider that in answer to the devotion of Jesus who finished the work that the Father had given Him to do, it is recorded for all to read, "This Jesus hath God raised up" (Acts 2:32), and "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name . . . that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

The shadow has led us to the glory.

FELLOW-WORKERS WITH PAUL _____ T. D. SPICER

6. PHOEBE

IT may be truthfully said that the service of women is a characteristic of Christianity and that we see this most clearly exemplified in connection with the Apostle Paul and his fellow-workers.

Such service began in the early days of the Gospel, during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself, where we see Him regularly assisted by the devotion, sympathy and loving service of a company of women. They followed Him from one place to another, and found satisfaction in easing His burden and supplying His needs. When Luke tells of our Lord passing "throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God", he mentions not only that "the twelve were with Him", but also "certain women" (Luke 8:1-3). At the Cross they were still ministering, and even at the grave itself we see them in the same spirit of service.

When we read of the events of the primitive Church we find that women are in the forefront in efficient service. With the Apostle Paul, however, there comes an even wider range of activity and we can begin to trace the ministry of women. The names of Dorcas, Mary (the mother of John Mark), Lydia (who has already been a subject in this series of studies), Damaris, Priscilla and the daughters of Philip the Evangelist, are all mentioned in Acts. In the epistles we find the names of Apphia, Claudia, Chloe, Euodias and Syntyche: and especially in the Epistle to the Romans do we find a list of women which is almost startling.

It is, however, with Phoebe that we are now concerned, on account of her direct association with the Apostle Paul and the specific nature of her commendation. Paul writes, "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also" (Romans 16:1-2). What a commendation!

A Pagan

The name of Phoebe was also that of a goddess and suggests that Phoebe came from a pagan family. Now she was a sister in the Lord, and having reached a degree of maturity was accounted worthy of respect at Cenchrea, as may be indicated by the statement that she was "a servant of the Church".

Cenchrea was the Eastern seaport of Corinth and about nine miles away from that city. Corinth itself is full of interest on account of the Apostle's connection with it. He was there on two occasions. His first visit was on the second missionary journey, where on his return we find him sailing from the harbour of Cenchrea (Acts 18:18). During the third missionary journey he stayed in Corinth, during which time he wrote the Epistle to the Romans and it is almost certain that Phoebe was the carrier of it to Rome. So on both occasions Paul is definitely associated with Cenchrea.

It is difficult to dogmatise about the form of service undertaken by Phoebe in the absence of further details, yet it seems that some specific service had been hers and we ought not to overlook that the Greek word can be translated "deaconness", or, as in the New Translation, "minister of the assembly". Certainly conditions of life at that time must have made it necessary that there should be women who could visit the parts of the house reserved for women only. Perhaps her special work was that which is outlined in 1 Timothy 5:9-10 and Titus 2:4, in which case she would instruct the younger women and undertake duties in keeping with the nature of a woman.

A Patron

The account given of her services may, however, also help our understanding. She had been a "succourer of many". The phrase is an attractive one in English and yet it does not express all that is implied in the original. "Succour" may be given in various ways and it seems to indicate one who had stood out as the patron of the under-privileged and the despised. There is little doubt that Christians in the first century were objects of contempt throughout the civilised world and even if this were not so, a study of the Greek word would yield the sense of moral courage, generous bounty, or championing the cause of others. Her residence at Cenchrea would enable her to exercise hospitality and to give other assistance to Christians on their arrival in the country. The point of importance for us is that all these qualities are found here in a woman.

It would appear that Phoebe was a person of some rank and wealth and her freedom to travel may indicate that she was a widow. We might then compare her with the "great woman" of Shunem, "dwelling among her own people", who showed hospitality to Elisha. Certainly the Apostle's feeling finds expression in language which is very similar to that used by the prophet, "behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee?" (2 Kings 4:8, 13). Nor was Phoebe's assistance solely given to Paul for he says

of her, "she has been the succourer of many" and a large amount of devoted active service is shown by the use of the phrase. Phoebe is a worthy follower of those women in the Gospels who ministered to our Lord, and a wonderful example to other women who wish to demonstrate their affection for Christ.

There is also a strictly personal note in the commendation when Paul adds, "and of myself also". Here we meet that warm personal feeling which we have found before in these studies. Gratitude for what others had done for him is found at every turn. Without looking any further, this same chapter has other similar instances — Aquila, Priscilla have "laid down their necks for the faith"; Mary has "bestowed much labour on him"; Urbane has been a "help"; and Gaius has been his "host". So it is with Phoebe; it is no mere formal and official errand that takes her to Rome. The Apostle follows her with his gratitude. The letter which she took is the record of what he owed to her, and this obligation is made the ground of an appeal to the believers at Rome.

A Pattern

The Christians in the imperial city were to receive Phoebe "in the Lord, as becometh saints", and "to assist her in whatsoever business she hath need". These three claims deserve closer examination. "In the Lord" is a frequent expression of the Apostle and points to the fact that the people in question and all their concerns, belong to Christ. It suggests the thought of co-operation in Christian service. We might compare what Paul here says of Phoebe with what he wrote to the Corinthians of Timothy, "If he come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1 Corinthians 16:10).

The expression "as becometh saints", or "worthy of saints", can mean that Phoebe was to be received in such a way as she deserved; or as the Roman believers would act if they were true to Christ. But not only were they to give her a friendly and worthy reception, but to give her all necessary help in the prosecution of her business. This was a most reasonable request, for he is asking help for one whose help had "helped many". So there was, perhaps, an extra claim on account of the dangers and inconveniences of a long journey, at that time a very hazardous undertaking for anyone, especially a woman.

What a basis of true fellowship and unity is contained in these verses! Phoebe is shown to be an example and a pattern for others to follow, not only to the Christians in Rome whom Paul himself hoped to meet shortly, but to all believers of all times. How needful it is to receive one another in love as brethren in Christ and to serve each other for His sake. When fellow believers are earnestly devoting their lives in the service of Christ, being involved in active work and generous self-sacrifice, they ought to be encouraged, helped and strengthened by sympathy and respect, and by "whatever things they have need", in order to make their work effective. Such effort is in harmony with the desire of our Lord and the practice of His Apostles.

Jesus Christ accepted the ministry of Galilean women, and the "Apostle of Jesus Christ" has messages of special earnestness and significance for the "women which laboured with him in the Gospel" (Philippians 4:3).

COUNTING THE COST? _____ E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE words of our title come from a parable which the Lord Jesus used when great crowds were coming to Him. "If any man come to me," He said, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoso doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Then He added this: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish" (Luke 14:25-30).

The application of this parable is almost invariably that one should consider very carefully either (with some expositors) before one becomes a Christian at all, or (with others) before one undertakes some onerous service, such as going out as a missionary. The teaching is that a man should seek to foresee what the undertaking may demand of him, and should ask himself whether he is prepared for it all.

This seems to the writer a thoroughly unsound approach. For if someone begins his Christian career, or his missionary career, in this spirit, he may well maintain the same attitude throughout. But is this the way in which great servants of God have ever acted? Just imagine Saul of Tarsus, when told by Ananias of the Lord's words, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake?", saying, "Oh but Lord, I'd better think that over rather carefully. I don't know whether I could stand that"!

Going back to the Lord's parable, can we not see that while a man starting out to build a tower for *himself* is wise to count the cost first (and he is able to count it, because he knows what he intends to do), the Christian is only a servant. It is not his own tower he is going to build, and he can have no idea of what the enterprise entails. On what basis then, can he possibly count the cost? And as to becoming a Christian, and trying to count the cost first, this is no matter of undertaking to do something for God, but of fleeing from his own failures and wretchedness to enter the service of a Master who has almighty power and resource.

We conclude then, that the Lord's parable is not to be applied thus. Certainly a man should approach the service of God with prayer and self-judgment, not with rash emotion; but this is a very different thing from counting the cost. And if indeed we read further in Luke 14, we find the Lord saying, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not *all that he hath*, he cannot be my disciple". This is the very reverse of counting — it is laying all on the altar for the Lord to use as He will.

How then are we to understand the Lord's words in the parable?

There were crowds going with Him, and the Lord knew that most of them were not prepared for the cross — either His, that they should believe in a Messiah who was to be crucified, or their own, that they should follow such a one. So He gave them His stringent conditions for discipleship, as we have seen — “If any man hate not . . . he cannot be my disciple.” And then He added the parable.

His opening words “Which of you, intending to build a tower” remind us at once of how He answered the cavil that He received publicans and sinners: “What man of *you*, having a hundred sheep etc.”: “You must allow Me to seek My lost ones, as you do yours”. And again, when He healed the man with the dropsy on the Sabbath, He said “What man of *you*, having an ox or an ass fallen into a pit on the Sabbath will not straightway pull it out?” Now He says, to explain why He turned away the heedless crowds, “Which of *you*, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first etc.” He is applying the parable to Himself. We have seen it will not do to apply it to His servants.

We may ask, Why a tower? It was probably a watchtower in a vineyard He was referring to, a very simple and inexpensive structure and a common sight. It is as though He says, “If you would take care to make an estimate of the cost in such a simple matter, do you suppose I have been less careful in what I have come to do?”

And now if we ask of that which *He* was going to build, would it be a costly undertaking, the answer is, costly indeed! Costly above all for Himself, whose death on the cross must provide the foundation, and costly too for His disciples. This too He had counted, right down the ages. The scorn and hatred of the world, the immense labours, the self sacrifice, the toil and strife needed to maintain His truth against the assaults of Satan — He knew it all; and the blood and tears of the martyrs even down to the present day, all were present to His prophetic eye.

And because the full cost was known to Him, He insisted that only those who were willing to give up everything for Him, to commit themselves wholly to Him, could become His disciples. Otherwise, when the world's opposition became evident the crowds would fade away, and the “tower” would have had to be abandoned when scarcely begun.

Let us then refrain from talking of *our* counting the cost before we seek to serve the Lord. For none of us knows what being His disciples may yet involve. One might for example be prepared to give up a good career to become a missionary, and yet be quite unready to be tortured in a communist prison. Only by committing ourselves entirely to our Lord and Saviour can we be ready to meet the cost, which only He knows, in the strength which only He can give.

SOME BETTER THING

T. BALDERSTON

1. THE MANNER OF GOD'S SPEAKING

ARTICLES arise out of particular circumstances. In this case two things led me to the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Firstly, I wanted to find out what it said about the "heavenly calling". *We* say rather a lot about the "heavenly calling" (though we might not *do* as much about it as we say). But what does the Scripture say? Hebrews was the obvious place to look. Secondly, I was aware of not understanding the point of a lot of the argument in the Epistle. Take Chapter seven, for instance. That the writer of the Epistle was engaged in a step by step argument was obvious, but what that argument was, and what the point of it was, was less clear. It did not seem right to read the Epistle in a grasshopper manner, hopping from one well known passage to another well known passage, and largely ignoring the terrain in between. The Holy Ghost had caused all of it to be written. I trust that the great benefit I derived from studying the Epistle may prove communicable.

What is the Epistle about? Happily, the first three verses give us a very good idea. Let us examine them.

God, having spoken in many parts and in many ways of old to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days has spoken to us in [the person of] the Son (New Trans.).

We may start by noting *when* the original readers are said to have lived. They lived "in these last days"; more accurately, "at the end of these days". *These days* are the days in which God pleads with men, of old "in the prophets", now "in Son". By inserting *these* he distinguishes the days of which he is writing from the "latter days" of Isaiah 2:2, or the "days to come" of Amos 9:13, when Christ's enemies will have been made His footstool (cp. 2:8-9). This perspective is important to the understanding of the Epistle.

The first readers lived at the very end of "these days". They lived, then, in momentous times. This was true for Israel, to which they belonged, most particularly. For God had now said all that He can say. "he had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them saying, They will reverence my son" (Mark 12:6, R.V.). But it is also true for everybody everywhere. God has still no new voice, no further message for man than that spoken nineteen hundred years ago in the Son. He offers no more advanced understanding of His Word than what the Son's speaking opened up, no better understanding of ourselves than what His cross disclosed. God "spoke" (lit.) once for all "in Son". The world may think A.D. 30 a long time ago. We too may well wonder how both the "days" of the first readers and our own "days" can be the "last days". This is no new problem. It troubled the first readers too (see 10:32-39), for it is bred of apathy. The first readers of this Epistle were a faltering, apathetic lot. And are we, who may well be among its last readers, free of signs of weariness and apathy? *The Epistle was written to people like us, to remind us all*

that we live in momentous times, their momentousness being demonstrated not by what our senses see and hear around, but by what faith sees and hears above — by the Voice with which God now speaks. It may be that in grace the “last days” have proved the longest of all (2 Peter 3:9). But the Holy Ghost’s word to us is, “*Today* if ye will hear his voice . . .” (3:7).

What is this Voice?

Of old, God spoke to the fathers *in the prophets*. “The prophets” were a definite body of men, and God had spoken to Israel by them. Abraham (Genesis 20:7), Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18; Hosea 12:13), and David (Acts 2:30) can each be termed “prophets”. Living in different centuries, in many places, and bearing revelations made in many different ways, they all had this in common, that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Then their utterances were written down, and preserved to the writer’s generation as a definite collection — as “Holy Scripture”; what we call the “Old Testament”. Nothing was lost in this transmission, for the writer of this Epistle can write interchangeably “in David” (4:7), and “as the Holy Ghost says” (3:7). The same point shows however, that the *persons* of the prophets were of small account. It was the word of God which they spoke, and which was written down, to which all significance attached.

Now, however, God has spoken *in Son*. The omission of the article carries the implication of “One who has this character, that He is ‘Son’ ” (B. F. Westcott). It is His Person that gives character to His message. That God has spoken “in Son” is *itself* God’s voice to us. In what respects?

1. It is the language of authority. God has spoken in the Person of His *Son*, and in no mere creature. We must consider this point well. For if this Epistle stresses the Lord’s Sonship, it also speaks of His manhood more touchingly than almost any other. If it opens with the “Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things” its formal argument closes with “Jesus . . . and the blood of sprinkling” (12:25). The Manhood of Christ is essential to our salvation. But it is to the fact that the *Son* became man that we must hold. Nobody today (nor, evidently, in the environment of the first readers) denies that Christ was a man; it is in the fact that He is Son that we find the authority of the Voice with which God now speaks.

2. It is the language of heaven. It may have begun on earth to the people of Israel, as God in the Son Himself closed the prophets’ line, but it ended in heaven and from there this Voice now speaks. This is stated in the last verses of chapter 12 which, as we shall see, form the counterpart of these verses. “If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (12:25). To speak “in the prophets” is to speak “on earth”, for they were merely men of the earth. But to speak “in Son” is to speak from heaven. The “last of these days” is marked by a change in God’s dealings with men — from the earthly to the heavenly. This is especially important to us, who are not only

addressed from heaven, but also called to heaven. How much more serious, then, any tendency to despise the Voice with which God now speaks!

3. It is the language of love. "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him."

Now we may ask more closely, what is comprehended by the verb "spoke"? God's having spoken "in Son" opens the main part of the Epistle; His voice from heaven concludes it. It is fair to infer that we find the content of the speaking in what comes in between. From this it follows that the speaking is not confined to the things spoken by the Son on earth (though it certainly does not exclude them — 2:3). Rather, the Epistle teaches us that God has spoken to us in Who the Son is, in What He has done, and in Where He is now. Who He is, is the subject of chapters one and two. What He has done, the subject of chapters eight to ten. Where He is now, spans the whole Epistle (1:4, 13; 2:9; 4:14; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:24; 10:12; 12:2, 24). These three subjects are intimately connected, as we shall see. What He has done, depends on Who He is. Where He is now depends on Who He is, and on What He has done. But Who He is, is only made good to us in What He has done and Where He is now. These are subjects which cannot leave the believer's heart unmoved.

It is by the statement of these *facts about "the Son"* that the Holy Ghost works against apathy and apostasy. In a "charismatic" age that looks to signs and experiences on earth for the strengthening of faith, He points to a Person who took His seat in heaven; to an age which stresses the evidence of God's working today as an antidote to apathy and unbelief, He points primarily to a work once done. Activity now, signs of God's working in us now, holiness now, are urgently needed — let nobody deny that, but it is not God's way that these things should feed off themselves. Interest in the Person, the Work, and the heavenly Session of the Son is not strong at the present time, even among Christians. And yet these are the facts, so "the Holy Ghost says", which, when grasped by faith, empower the believer to "lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees".

One more point should be made before we are done with the first verse and a half of this Epistle. In them the writer seems to hint not only at the content but also at his method of procedure. More than any other Epistle, this one is an *exposition* of Old Testament Scriptures, in the light of Christ's having come. "He [Paul] is unfolding the treasures of the O.T. in the light of Christ, His blood and presence in heaven most particularly" (W. Kelly, *Exposition of Hebrews*, p. 50). When the writer says, "in the prophets", he hints at his method. The climax of the "partial and fragmentary" revelations of God in the Old Testament Scriptures, and their constituting unity, are the Son. The writer will use the Law (chapter nine), the Prophets (2:13, 10:37-38) and "the Writings" (1:5,7,8,10,13, etc.) to speak of Christ. But he calls them all "prophets", rather than "the Law and the Prophets" or the like, because only as they pre-speak of Christ do they speak to us

at all (cp. Romans 1:2). This enables us to see why this Epistle, which speaks of Christ in heaven, never speaks of "the mystery" (definition: Ephesians 3:3-12) whereas Ephesians, where "the mystery" is a major subject, is scarcely dependent on Old Testament passages. If we fail to grasp that this Epistle is in the main (with one significant exception*) a sustained exposition of the Old Testament, or fail to take this fact seriously, we fail to understand it. Commentaries, some bearing impeccable "evangelical" credentials, which depreciate the writer's exegesis, terming it "rabbinical" or the like (and meaning it perjoratively) cannot be trusted in their interpretation very far, for they have rejected the very core of its argument.

In three relative clauses the writer proceeds to define the particular glories of the Son.

1. *Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.* There can be no higher authority in heaven or earth than that which God has committed to the Son. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). And this is only the smaller part: "Thou has put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:6). The exercise of this authority is, so to speak, suspended. Meanwhile the "heathen rage" (cp. Acts 4:25). Meanwhile He speaks in mercy but soon is the day of His "anger". "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings . . . [but] Blessed are all they that put their trust in him"!

2. Not only will He be present with all authority in the "Day" to come, but He was active, in all power and wisdom at the beginning. *By whom He also made the worlds.* He was no Latecomer to the plan of God; His Sonship no mere title conferred on a Man in virtue of His moral perfections. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was . . . When he prepared the heavens, I was there" (Proverbs 8:23,27).

3. The first clause speaks of an authority He is about to exercise. The second clause speaks of a power He exercised long, long ago. The third clause speaks of His power and position at this present time. It comes last, because it is the climax and focus of the writer's attention. *Who . . . sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.* This phrase is an allusion to Psalm 110:1. That verse, and the fourth of the same Psalm, may be said to undergird the entire Epistle. The readers live in the time when Christ is seated in heaven, but before His enemies have been made His footstool. Why is He hid from sight in heaven now? What is His present activity there? These are among the chief questions of the Epistle.

As sitting there, four things are said to characterise Him.

(i) *Being the brightness of his glory.* "Being" denotes what is eternally true of the Son. But what is always true of Him, is true of Him now. As the sun is not known apart from its brightness, so God is not now known apart from the glory that beams out of the face of the

*As far as I can see, the truth of the believer's calling to heaven (3:1; 6:20; 12:2) is nowhere founded on O.T. quotation.

Son at His right hand. By "glory" he means the sum of the essential (eternity, unchangeableness, omnipotence, and so on), including the moral (love, holiness, faithfulness, etc.) qualities of Godhead. Almost all of the qualities listed find a context somewhere in this Epistle: see 1:8-11, 13:8, 7:25-28, 10:23. Only a divine Person can properly reveal the Godhead. "The brightness of his glory" is, then, a very strong statement of the Son's Deity. But, lest it be concluded that the Son is but an emanation of the Godhead, it continues (ii) *and the expression of his substance* (New Trans.). The word "expression" means here, I understand, "the impression made by a stamp or mould on something else". Adam was, in a limited way, the image or "stamp" of God. But only the Son, Himself "God of God", can fully express the "substance" (or, Being) of Godhead. This second phrase on its own might leave in doubt the unity of Being; the first phrase on its own might leave in doubt the distinction of Persons. But taken together, they give such a full, and fully guarded, statement about the Son, as none but the Holy Ghost could in so few words have expressed. It will be evident that while it is in His divine Being that Christ is the "brightness" and the "expression" of God, it is only because He is Man that we see it at all.

From the *Being of Him who sits at the right hand of God*, we pass to His work. (iii) *Upholding all things by the word of his power*. He is not merely the Instrument or User of the power of Another. As God in Himself He ceaselessly determines the existence of all things. But if His ceaseless creatorial power is awesome, it is in His single redemptive act that the writer is chiefly interested. Again it comes last for this reason. (iv) *Having made the purification of sins*. The emphasis is not upon His mercy and love in doing this work, but upon His greatness. Only One who is in Himself Son could undertake so great a work as the purification of His universal inheritance from the contamination of man's sins. He did it *for Himself* (the force of the verb).

More than enough has now been said, about His Being, His creatorial power, and about His redemptive work, to explain His perfect right to have *sat Himself down at the right hand of the greatness on high* (New Trans.). To conclude the article with Christ at the right hand of God is the right way to finish it. These magnificent clauses were not written (I repeat) for the benefit of Christians who were going on well, but for the benefit of Christians who were going on badly. It is by engaging their hearts and minds with Christ outside of, and above this world, with Christ at the right hand of God, that the "holy brethren" are stirred up to live out their "heavenly calling" (3:1). Where this is happening, the Holy Ghost's work is being done.

SOME BETTER THING _____ T. BALDERSTON

2. THE MORE EXCELLENT NAME: HEBREWS 1:4-14

“Having become by so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance a name more excellent than they” (Hebrews 1:4, Kelly’s translation).

Having become relates this verse and what follows it to the statement of verse 3. Why is He at the right hand of God in exaltation? He is there in virtue of *who He is*. All that we will read in the rest of the chapter is an explanatory comment on that verse, showing from Scripture that His *name* entitles Him to be there. This name is firstly “Son”, as the next verse shows, but also “Firstborn”, “Lord”, and, in sum, “God”. In Scripture, the name declares what the Person is (e.g. Exodus 34:5ff.). Verses 4-13 not only buttress the statement of verse 3; they also state a comparison. Because Christ is God the Son, He is necessarily *better than the angels*. *Better* is a key word in this Epistle because, as is well known, its argument proceeds through a series of comparisons of which this is the first. Why introduce this comparison? Primarily, to exalt the word which the Son speaks. “For if the word spoken *by angels* was steadfast . . . how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken *by the Lord . . . ?*” (2:1-4).

Son though He is, the writer states in this verse that He has *become* better than the angels, and that He *inherited* the more excellent name. Was He not always Son and always better than they? Unless we make the writer contradict himself, He most certainly always was. For in 2:9 he states that Christ first of all became lower than the angels; in 7:3 he writes that to be presented in Scripture as being without beginning of days or end of life is to be “made like unto the Son of God”. In this very chapter uncreatedness and eternity are predicated of the Son (1:8-12). These are not merely “throwaway remarks”, *obiter dicta*, for, as we shall see, the argument of chapter 7 depends upon our Lord’s eternal Sonship.

Another construction of verse 4 must therefore be found. It is best appreciated if we consider the identity and situation of the first readers. I take it (without entering upon the controversies surrounding the question) that they were Jewish believers [cp. Chapter 2:16], perhaps Greek speaking but probably (from the complete silence about Gentile Christianity and their evident attraction to the Temple ritual) living in Palestine (cp. Acts 6:1, 9). From Acts 21:20 we learn that

there were thousands of believers in Jerusalem who were “zealous of the law” and who still availed themselves of the Temple worship. Peter and the eleven, and Paul, had by their practice sanctioned this. Now the time was passing, and the Lord’s return to Israel (Acts 1:6, 3:14-26) was obviously delayed, ardour was weakening (Hebrews 10:33-39). Such believers, whose distinction from “mainstream” Judaism consisted almost solely in the confession, “Jesus is the Christ”, stood in the especial danger of lowering their estimate of their own position to that of one sect among many within Judaism. Ultimately, for those among them whose faith was nominal rather than real, it was a short step over this line into Christ-rejecting Judaism. The writer writes this letter to emphasise to them just what this step is: apostasy and no less. And he works against this threat (a) by exalting Christ; by emphasising that He is the Son of God; (b) by exalting the *hope* that is bound up with Him — but of this, more later.

This is why he writes *having become*, and that He *inherited* His name. The writer starts not from eternity past, but from the point where his readers had, so to speak, met the Lord, from the “Jesus of Nazareth” preached in the Acts, from the “man approved of God”, and leads them up to the fulness of His Person. In His exaltation He took a place better than that of angels because then He came, in a new way (i.e. as Man) into full enjoyment of what belonged to the Name which *by right* was always His. This meaning of *inheritance* is adequately paralleled in other Scriptures (cp. Ephesians 1:18 — is anyone going to deny that all things always belonged to God?). The clear preaching that Jesus “is the Son of God” comes first in Acts with Paul in Damascus (Acts 9:20) and evidently these Palestinian believers, who of course had never denied it, needed to have it underlined to them. How skilfully Christ teaches by His Spirit! Like the Good Samaritan, He came to where these readers were. We, by contrast, are often too wrapped up in ourselves to be able to start at all from the condition and experience of those we seek to teach!

For (v. 5) introduces seven quotations by which the statement of the fourth verse will be substantiated. To compress discussion, I list them here:

	Verse	Short Quotation	Source
(i)	1:5	Thou art my Son . . .	Ps. 2:7
(ii)	1:5	I will be to him . . .	1 Chr. 17:13
(iii)	1:6	Let all the angels . . .	Dt. 32:43; Ps. 97:7
(iv)	1:7	Who maketh his angels . . .	Ps. 104:4
(v)	1:8	Thy throne, O God . . .	Ps. 45:6
(vi)	1:10	Thou, Lord, in the . . .	Ps. 102:25
(vii)	1:13	Sit thou . . .	Ps. 110:1

Commentators often allege that the writer of the Epistle wrests these quotations out of context, and that they are not particularly apposite proofs of verse 4. This is entirely false, but to understand their relevance we need to define more carefully just what it is that has

to be shown from Scripture and what is the relationship between writer and readers. That the readers confessed Jesus as Messiah is evident, for while these Scriptures show certain things to be true of Messiah, they do not establish that *Jesus* is Messiah. This was common ground between writer and readers. Furthermore, if we examine the contexts of these quotations we will discover the striking fact that the six of them that actually speak of Christ (the fourth speaks of the angels only) speak primarily of His *millennial* glory. This is not left to inference, for the writer himself seems to say as much in writing, "the world to come, *whereof we speak*" (2:5). Thirdly, five of these six quotations look forward to Christ's millennial glory from a time when His power is not yet universally acknowledged (Psalm 45:6 is the exception). It is, then, scarcely speculative to suppose that, taken together, these would be the kind of Scriptures frequently on the lips of the readers as defining their particular hopes as Jewish believers awaiting the return of their Messiah from heaven. The writer seems, then, to use familiar Scriptures to teach them of the character of the Saviour. He will go on to instruct them in a better hope, but first he instructs them in Him whose divine nature guarantees it. In Scriptures where, perhaps without a great deal of thought, they had seen Messiah *the man*, he shows them Messiah as God.

But lastly, the application of two of these quotations to Christ is not obvious until the writer has made it. Precisely these cases indicate (unless he be held to have a bigger mess of his 'proof' than any ordinarily competent writer would) that the writer of the Epistle was *consciously* inspired, and that his readers accepted the Holy Ghost authority of his interpretations of Scripture.

Let us now consider these seven quotations.

(i) *Unto which of the angels*. What follows is the first of several quotations to be employed in an argument from the silence of Scripture. There is no Scripture in which God addresses any angel, in the singular, as "my Son". What Scripture does not say is as significant as what it does say. Notice that the writer could only use this argument because he believed in a defined, closed, *canon* of Scripture. Had he believed in an open-ended canon, constantly expanding through the admission of 'apocryphal' writings, a negative answer to the question would have been in principle impossible. Today, when even 'Evangelical' commentators are abandoning *canon* as a working axiom, this rather obvious point needs to be insisted on.

My Son art thou: I have this day begotten thee. "Scripture speaks of Jesus as Son in two different aspects: as Son of God, born into this world, and as Son according to the eternal relationship. This verse refers to the first of these: Jesus is seen . . . in His glory as born Son" (J.N.D. *Collected Writings*, vol. 28, p. 3). The beauty of the quotation is reinforced by the emphatic juxtaposition of *thou* and *I* in the Greek. While such a point cannot be insisted on, this seems to emphasise that Christ and none other is God's Son; that He is God's Son and nothing less; and that between God and His Son there is an intimacy that no creature can know.

(ii) According to all translations the Hebrew of 1 Chronicles 17:13 (2 Samuel 7:14, verbally identical, is in its context a less suitable source) is rather more definite (I will be his father . . .) than the Septuagint rendering quoted here (I will be to him *for* father . . .). Probably the Septuagint translators modified its literalness in view of its obvious application to Solomon. But may we not suppose that the inspired writer, finding its true interpretation in Christ, argues from the sense of the original Hebrew? In the last days there will be a king who is God's Son.

Modern commentators almost all feel obliged to justify (or explain) the writer's application of this prophecy, made initially about Solomon, to "a greater than Solomon". *It is a pregnant fact that the writer of the Epistle felt no compulsion himself to justify his interpretation.* This is a result not only of the authority which flowed from his sense of inspiration, but also from the fact that his sense of context differed from that prevalent today. He did not interpret exclusively from the immediate context, nor yet restricted himself to what the "historical context" made plausible; he operated not at all from some hypothetical reconstruction of "sources". To him, the *context of the canon* was primary. He interpreted Scripture *by Scripture*". Knowing that "no prophecy is of private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20), he classed this verse together with Psalm 2 above and Psalm 89 to follow, and found in them a thread running through the Scriptures. All of these passages cannot speak of Solomon, but they do speak of the same thing. They speak of *Christ* as Son of God. Having gained this truth from reflection on the Scriptures as a whole, he can then apply it in each case, without however doing violence to the narrower context. *We have here an important "worked example" of how to interpret Scripture*, and those commentaries now flooding Christian bookshops, which have abandoned this approach in favour of one allegedly more 'critical', would do well to ponder it.

(iii) In verse 6 we have both an allusion and a quotation. The allusion is *Firstborn* — to Psalm 89:27. The Firstborn is the king of David's house (v. 19) who will say to God, "Thou art my Father" (v. 26). This allusion forms a transition from the first two quotations which have spoken of the Sonship of Christ, to the next four, which speak directly of His deity. The quotation — "Let all the angels of God worship him" — is probably a clause of Deuteronomy 32:43 hitherto preserved only in the Septuagint, but recently attested in a Hebrew fragment from the Dead Sea. The Septuagint of Psalm 97:7 is however, similar.

Whichever it is, how does the writer infer that it is the *Firstborn* who is the object of worship? From the contexts it seems to be *Jehovah*. As stated above, the only satisfactory resolution lies in the conscious and accepted inspiration of the writer. His interpretation is by no means arbitrary, however. Consider, for example, the use of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 in Mark 1:3, etc. The preparation of the way of *Jehovah*, and the messenger before *Jehovah's* face, are fulfilled in John Baptist's testimony to *Jesus*. It seems to be a truth of the Scriptures that the final manifestation of the covenant-keeping God

of Israel (for this is the force of *Jehovah*) is in Jesus, rejected at His first coming, but to be acknowledged universally in time to come (cp. Acts 2:21, 36; Romans 10:9, 13 with Joel 2:32; or Philippians 2:10-11 with Isaiah 45:21-23). It is the Holy Spirit in the New Testament who unlocks the Old, and not *vice-versa*.

That angels are called on to *worship* Him indicates the reality of the identification of Jehovah with Jesus (cp. Revelation 19:10).

(iv) Readers of modern translations who doubt whether this quotation accurately reproduces the Hebrew of Psalm 104:4 need to know that what these translations put there is by no means undisputed, even by rationalist critics. This beautiful Psalm expresses the praise which rises up in the Psalmist's heart as he contemplates the created order. This context justifies us in putting the accent of the quotation upon *makes*, in contrast to the uncreated Son, who is addressed as God and whose throne *is* for ever and ever.

(v) Little more need be said about the quotation from this lovely Psalm, except to mark the perfection with which the paradox of our Lord's Godhead and Humanity is expressed. "Thy throne, O God", and, "God, thy God hath anointed thee". A primary lesson of the entire chapter is that while we must distinguish the two natures of Christ, we may never divorce them.

(vi) The sixth quotation forms the counterpart of the contrast made in the previous pair. There, angels, as having been *made*, are contrasted with the uncreated Son. Here, the whole creation, hastening on to its *dissolution*, is contrasted with the *Son* (the rubric to the fifth quotation governs this one also) who created it, and whose years *have no end*. The writer states, then, that in Psalm 102 there is a change of speaker in the middle of verse 24. "Without Hebrews 1, we might not have found it out; with it we at once see that no other interpretation gives adequate meaning to the Psalm!" (Kelly, *Exposition*, p. 20). In particular, if no change of speaker is supposed, it is difficult to see how, "Thy years are to all generations" can have comforted the speaker in the face of, "Take me not away in the midst of my days".

With this sixth quotation we reach the apex of those Old Testament statements of the divine glories of the Son. Here we touch Him as very God in Himself, as the great I AM.

(vii) The last quotation rounds off the collection by reverting to the "argument from silence" form of the first two, and by bringing us back to the high point at the end of verse 3. The first and last Psalms of this collection will reappear together in chapters 5 and (implicitly) 7, as foundational to the priesthood of Christ. Here, in this majestic conclusion, the writer contrasts the Son's present position with the servant-status (albeit *honourable* servant-status) of angels toward them who in their original state are inferior to angels, but who by Christ have been taken up beyond angels. *Ministering spirits* is founded on the fourth quotation.

Now the writer has completed his proof of Christ's perfect right; in virtue of His Name, to be seated at God's right hand. God loves to bring us there. "All the Father's counsels claiming equal honours to

the Son". How much of the "good matter" that was in the writer's heart "touching the king" has been slipped over in this article! Here I have only attempted to show the meticulous perfection with which the Holy Spirit of God has employed the Old Testament Scriptures to speak of the fulness found in that more excellent Name of *Son*.

GETTING THE TRUTH WELL ————— A. H. RULE [1895]

This excerpt should be read in conjunction with the excerpt from the same writer published in May, for they complement each other nicely.

It is an undeniable fact that during the present [now the past] century God has wrought a very remarkable work in recovering to His people much truth that had been practically lost, recovering not only the blessed gospel of His grace in its riches and fulness, but also the truth as to the Church which is Christ's body, and reviving the blessed hope of the Church, the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was God's work, and many were affected by it, and brought under its power.

But such movements are always followed by a time of testing. God works, and then leaves the results in man's hand as responsible to hold fast, and witness to the truth entrusted to him. And here failure comes in. It has always been so. It was so after the great work which was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was so after the remarkable work of the reformation under Luther, Zwinglius and others. And it has been so since the work which began in the first half of the present [now past] century. I think no one can look over the history of this movement without recognising that there has been very serious declension. And when there is declension there has been failure — lack of self-denial and of devotedness to the Lord; the truth losing its power over the soul, and with this the decline of spiritual energy and power.

Where there is a divine movement going on which is marked by much power and blessing, it is easy to go on while the current is steady and strong . . . Many have been attracted by the grace that has been preached, and the simplicity and brotherly love that have been manifested, and have taken their place amongst us without any clear understanding of the real ground of gathering. They are in their right place, and need instruction and building up through the gracious ministry of the Word. But they are often neglected and make little progress, and when trouble arises they are at sea.

Many also have come amongst us of late years, who have taken their place . . . [having] got the truth easily, because it has been made easy for them, and they *have not got it well*. Those who were first in the movement were like the armies of Joshua, who had to *conquer* in order to *possess*. Their children did not have to do this, and so did not value, as their fathers did, the land of Jehovah, nor did they fear Him and keep His commandments. The result was that they were soon overcome by their enemies. So it is now. Those who received the

truth under deep and prolonged exercise of soul, searching the Word of God with fastings and prayers and tears, in the face of opposition and reproach, *valued* it when they got it. They bought it dearly, and would not sell it. But now the truth has been developed and formulated, even popularized, and many have got it with little labour or exercise. They have got it only from man, and have not made it really their own from the Word of God. And when the test comes they cannot hold it against the attacks of the enemy. Truehearted, earnest souls may get it, after they have learned their weakness; but they have to go all over the ground again with *God* so as *really* to possess what they only thought they had. But many do not stand the test at all, and where there has been lack of reality the door is opened to many evils. Worldliness, slackness of soul, neglect of prayer and reading God's Word, and such like things manifest themselves in a state like this.

PSALM 150

COLIN CURRY

Recently a remark was made to the writer that believers too rarely find themselves in the fifth book of Psalms. What was meant by that comment? It may be well to make some general points about the place of the Psalms in Christian thinking, and then to consider the character of the later Psalms (and the probable meaning of the above-mentioned remark), before concentrating on Psalm 150 in particular.

The Christian View of the Psalms

The fifth and last book of Psalms extends from Psalm 107 to 150, and it is fair to say that this is not the most frequented area of the Old Testament. Even in the Psalms itself, most of what may be called the well-known Psalms fall outside it. It is plainly right that Christians should in the first place be well-grounded in the New Testament, where Christian truth is primarily presented to us. Also it is important to give some priority to the New Testament to see its linkages with the Old Testament, and so to discover how each Testament assists the understanding of the other. To plunge into the Psalms without the light of the rest of Scripture, would not introduce us into full Christian light and freedom. Indeed, to think of the Psalms as *Christian* response to God, Christian experience, Christian hymnody and worship, is a confusion of things that differ. The book of Psalms is certainly experience, deep and real experience, and the feelings of godly men are laid bare there. There is much to learn from the piety and sensitivity of these men of old, their reality before God, and the open expression of their feelings. Often they do this under the heavy burden of circumstances. The poetic form, the acuteness of the language, and yet its music and beauty, seem to agree with the deep and moving nature of the experiences. Having to do with God, in a profound way, stamps on a godly person a certain quality of reaction to such experiences.

Nevertheless, the book of Psalms is a collection of responses to God suitable primarily to those who knew their God in the way the writers did. In other words, it is suited to the earthly people of God

in the light of His particular dealings with them. When at last God renews His dealings with His people Israel, there is much in the Psalms apposite to that day too. Hence the Psalms contain prophetic material; they reflect attitudes and experience of the faithful in Israel when sore pressures are upon them. God will be their refuge and strength amid the cataclysms of their tribulation; and He will be their rejoicing and their Deliverer at the end.

Of course men of faith in every day have much in common. Awe and reverent fear before God, and closeness of trust in Him, are as right for Christians as for faithful persons of other times. Christian truth does not replace earlier truth, it incorporates it into something larger. The Christian revelation encompasses all the earlier elements of God's revelation, though it surpasses and completes all that preceded it. Thus the manner of these godly men has great importance for us; and indeed we may well feel rebuked by their zeal and fidelity to God. However, they were not responding to God as known in Christ; and the way in which God is known affects the response of the person who knows Him. It affects both the content and the quality of his responses, whether these be urgent petitions, questionings about His ways, or expressions of thankfulness and praise.

The end stages of the Psalms

Amongst the Psalms, what specially distinguishes the closing ones? The last five Psalms each begin and end with a vigorous "Hallelujah", and leave no doubt about the answer to that question. These outbursts of high praise to Jehovah pervade the whole set of Psalms forming the fifth book. Each of the separate sections of the Psalms ends with a doxology; but in the final book a strong stream of praise appears at times on the surface, and mounts in a great crescendo at the end. At the close there is nothing else than a joyous and zestful climax of praise.

It is to be expected, of course, that God's ways with His earthly people, and in the broader sense among the nations, will ultimately result in nothing but praise and honour to Him. Especially this will come from those who are reclaimed and re-created by His grace; and indeed it will be contributed to from all the ends of the earth in the long run. But on the way to that end-point His people will have passed through many a heavy and harrowing time, of the kind often expressed throughout the body of the Psalms. They will have behind them times of desolation and near-desperation, of feeling bereft of all that they had held dear, when hope in the God of their fathers reached a low ebb indeed. They will have known the stirrings of conscience, gropings towards their Messiah, awakenings to their guilt in rejecting Him. The realisation will have dawned on them of all that He has suffered, in a certain sense with them, sharing the trials they have known. Still more wonderful, they will have found that He has suffered in their place, suffering for them as their great sin-offering, and acting for them in many another important way too. Appreciations of the many qualities of the Person through whom God has laid bare His strong arm for their rescue and redemption, will have come out of the turmoil now

behind them. All of these inward experiences are voiced in the main body of the Psalms. Our blessings and our expectations as Christians may be different from theirs, but we also know about the inward searchings and the deep repentance which underlie our faith in Christ; we know too about the relief that comes from reliance on Him, and from occupation with Him. As regards the basis of our faith, namely, being utterly dependent on God's sovereign grace and Christ's great action for us, we are certainly alongside them. We know God in a different way from the Psalm-writers, and different expressions from theirs would often suit Christians better (none of them, for instance, addresses God as Father; and the spirit of forgiveness as a reaction to abuse is not a prominent feature of the Psalms). But in many ways we are their fellows, passing through our own trials of faith, sharing some of their great insights into the glory and greatness of their Redeemer, though having considerably more of this available to our faith in the present day.

But there comes a time (and it comes to us at times even while on our Christian journey) when relief from pressures is known, when times of disquiet and conflict are forgotten, and joyful praise is the only proper activity. The closing Psalms envisage the people of God emerging from their tribulations, and entering in an uninhibited way into a total response to God their Deliverer, who has fulfilled all His promises and His intentions for them. The last Psalm in the second book (Psalm 72) sees afar to the earthly reign of Christ, with all the benefits it will bring, and closes with the words, "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended". The days of hard pressure and urgent prayer will end; praise alone will be appropriate then, and there will be nothing half-hearted about it!

Thus, the remark mentioned in the opening sentence may have had the following intention. The kind of expressions suitable to a reclaimed Israel, addressed to Jehovah, may not be ours; nor would the mode and the materials of their worship correspond to worship of the Father "in spirit and in truth". But the spirit of enthusiastic delight in God, especially as we know Him in Christ, is surely something into which we should enter; and, as that remark implied, perhaps we know less of it than we should. Believers have many burdens, and heavy ones too, but there is always a retreat from these things, and a welcome there, where free and open response and thanksgiving to God through Christ is a possibility, and a great relief, too, to hard-pressed spirits. The day is coming when these experiences will be consummated in the fullest sense.

*Past conflict then; O Lord 'tis ours
Through everlasting days,
To sing our song of victory there,
And only live to praise.*

Psalm 150

This last Psalm completes the Psalter with one grand burst of all-round praise. It is a final close-down, short and stimulating in form. The

earlier movements of praise to Jehovah mount to this great climax, which seals and rounds off the whole story. Though it is an end, it envisages what is endless.

Referring back to Psalm 148, that Psalm particularly scans over a vast range of contributors to Jehovah's ultimate praise. Starting in the heights of the heavens, noticing angels by the way, all created things are seen to provide their quota of praise to Him. Then the Psalm comes down to earth. Living things fulfil their role; animate and inanimate things, great and small, assert by their very existence the greatness of Jehovah. Then the focus falls on those able to appreciate something of Him, reacting to the declaration of His Name. Human beings of every class and age are involved, joining in consciously, faced with the great disclosure of Israel's God, then so open and patent. Then, in the closing verse, Israel comes to the fore, the special object of Jehovah's favour, giving high honour to Him at last, and in the vanguard of witness and response to Him in all the earth. Psalm 149 enlarges on that closing verse of Psalm 148, picking out Israel's central part in this great recognition of her God in all the earth. Here is the destined function of God's earthly people, often foreseen in Old Testament prophecy, but fallen short of so dismally in Israel's earlier career. High glory will come to Jehovah through His elect nation when His purpose in calling them eventually materialises; and it will be no less full and brilliant because of its long delay.

Psalm 150 summarises and crowns all those preceding Psalms in concise fashion. The urge towards the day when God is fully honoured fills the Psalm, and all possible contributors are pressed to join in. Verse 1 speaks of the *extent* of this ultimate praise to God, from its centre to its circumference (though no limits are really in mind). Verse 2 briefly identifies the strong *reasons* for participation in this praise; while the remaining verses demonstrate the *manner* of praise that honours Him, and indicate the massed effect of the acclamation due to God in all its many parts.

His praise is to be as wide as the heavens and the earth (verse 1). "In His sanctuary" probably implies the earthly sanctuary, His centre on earth. But "in the firmament of His power" sets no boundaries to the extent of His praises. It goes beyond all material and temporal limits and horizons. "In His sanctuary" could equally well be "in His holiness". The freedom and forthrightness of the praise voiced in these Psalms is soundly based. Evil has been thoroughly exposed and overcome; God is known in grace, but also in absolute righteousness and holiness. All real approach to God recognises His holiness; this praise is no shallow exuberance, even though it is fervent and energetic in character.

Verse 2 underlines the compelling reasons for this unstinted acclamation. "His excellent greatness" calls forth praise, and surely we Christians know about this in a way that surpasses all Old Testament awareness of God. The only right reaction to God, in all the brightness of His self-revelation in Christ, is a total response on our part. Praise is due for what He is; but also for the way He has shown Himself. "His mighty acts" — saving acts on our behalf — have shown the

greatness and the glory (and, not least, the holy love) of the God in whom we trust. Israel will know it in their own particular way, and the whole universe will observe it, in due time.

The rest of the psalm exhibits the manner of right praise to Jehovah. *Everything* should be put into it; anything less than a total response falls short of what is due. Those who respond to God at all suitably show that they understand this by their zeal and wholeheartedness. How well the Psalm demonstrates it! There is no flagging, no distraction, no mentioning of self, in this kind of praise.

All kinds of instruments are rallied to the praise of God. The Jewish background is clear. There are instruments associated with Israel's high occasions in the past, solemn occasions and joyous ones too, marking God's interventions on their behalf. There are instruments associated with simple domestic joy and purely personal melody-making. The variety in the parts of this total praise is evident. Some of the contributions are soft and delicate, others are decisive and strong in character, while others are marked by pure melody and grace. It needs *everything* to respond properly to such an Object. This praise is truly harmonious; yet it is also strongly asserted, and of such volume that none will miss the sound of it! In some degree it will carry the onlookers with it by its own verve and grace; but, of course, what really draws in onlookers is absorption themselves with the Focus of all this exultant response. In the long run all onlookers will become participants, and everything that has breath will praise the LORD.

It is clear that response to Israel's God, known at length in the widest sense, is dominant in the Psalms right to the end. Our part is to recognise the spirit of these passages, rather than to follow the details. Israel first travelled the long wilderness way with all its rigours, and later entered the promised land, with great joy and celebration. At the present time they have long been "in the wilderness" in another sense; but they will surely fill their destined place in God's time, and blessing from God will fill the earth. These great and concerted responses will flow back to Him then, in the unrestrained manner demonstrated in these closing Psalms.

But, as has often been said, the Christian while travelling along his wilderness journey has *at the same time* the opportunity to enter into "the land" that God makes available to him. It is a present experience, just as possible, just as real as the testing experiences of the journey of faith. It needs faith to grasp these possibilities too. But what a rich land is ours to enter! It is the land where self is forgotten, and even high blessings are not the main interest, but where the great God who has blessed us in Christ, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", is at the centre of all attention and response. It is the land where Christ fills every eye, where "Christ is all, and in all". It is the area where the energy of the Spirit springs up within the believer, where the living water is not only tasted but overflows like a fountain in response to the Father and the Son.

While certainly we know about the testing of our faith as we pursue our Christian lives, let us by faith enter into *these* areas of Christian experience too. Let us already be playing our part in

the loud chorus of eternity, and, after the example of this Psalm, let us put our whole heart and soul into it.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question. *I have always been taught that Jairus' daughter really died, and that the Lord raised her from death. I have now heard it said that she did not die (was not dead), but was asleep. It was said that the Greek word used for "sleepeth" supports this belief.*

Answer. There would be some hint of truth in the conclusion drawn from the Greek word used, if this evidence were considered only in isolation. In all the familiar passages where real physical death is the meaning — Matthew 27:52, John 11:11,12, Acts 13:36, 1 Corinthians 11:30, 15:6,51, 1 Thessalonians 4:14 — the word is *koimaomai*. In the story of Jairus' daughter the word is *katheudo*. *Katheudo* is, however employed in one case where most take it that death of the body is meant (1 Thessalonians 5:10). On the ground of the words used *alone*, the probability would be, but not the certainty, that physical death is not the meaning in "The maid . . . sleepeth".

All this is, however, quite beside the point, since in Luke 8:49-56 the story is clearly one of raising the dead. V. 53; "they knew she was dead". V. 55; "her spirit came again".

The fact still remains that the Lord Jesus said "she is not dead". This is an instance of something often found in Scripture, i.e. the true meaning is arrived at by inserting a word. It means, "she is not finally dead".

The heart that loves the Lord will guide the mind to sense with certainty that the maid was really dead, and that we have here one of the instances in which the Lord Jesus "declared [Himself] to be the Son of God . . . by the raising of those that are dead" (Romans 1:4). Was special faith, or even a journey (Luke 5:36) required to understand that Jesus could awaken a girl from natural sleep? J.S.B.

SHADOWS OF THE SAVIOUR ————— GORDON KELL

2. JOSEPH'S SUFFERING AT THE HANDS OF HIS BRETHREN

This article and the next are both about "shadows". In comparing the developments of the metaphor readers might be led to reflect, as we were, on the different ways in which men of God of two dispensations can be found to represent Christ.

Of all the types of Christ there are in the Old Testament, few compare with Joseph. Throughout his story — his father's love, his brethren's hatred, his sufferings at the hands of the heathen, his release from prison and his eventual glory — there is a foreshadowing of one Person — the Lord Jesus. It is worth mentioning that even before Joseph's birth, Jacob's remarkable love for Rachel in spite of her

idolatry portrayed God's deep and abiding love for Israel, the nation into which Christ was born.

If we focus on Genesis 37, we clearly see events in Joseph's life which direct our attention to a part of the Lord's experience which we can easily overlook but which He deeply felt — rejection and suffering at the hands of His own brethren. Although it is difficult to measure the simple intensity of John 1:11, this chapter allows us a holy insight into its meaning.

“Now Israel loved Joseph”

Joseph held a pre-eminent place in Jacob's heart and that relationship was outwardly expressed by the “coat of many colours” or the “richly ornamented robe” which he wore. It was for all to see, just as the Lord's Person, words and acts bore witness to the fact that He was “One with the Father”.

In His life, as in Joseph's, the display of His unique character and the promise of His coming glory (pictured in Joseph's dreams) demanded faith and worship, but instead received hatred and envy (v. 11 compare Matthew 27:18).

“I will send thee unto them.” The Father's will and the Son's willingness are clearly seen in this story as in that of Abraham and Isaac, but here the Spirit of God adds three things: Jacob's concern for his children, the distance between his sons and himself and the intention of Joseph to find them.

It is not stretching the words of Genesis, especially when compared with Scriptures like Luke 20 (the parable of the vineyard), to suggest how each of these signifies matters of tremendous importance between God and Israel. Firstly, God's “everlasting love” for that nation; secondly, the distance set between Israel and her God by her own idolatry and later by the spiritual pride and hypocrisy witnessed by the Lord Himself. Finally, the determination of the Lord to “seek and to save that which was lost”.

The words of Joseph, “I seek my brethren”, and his persistence in going to Dothan and to brothers who he knew resented him, point beautifully to the Lord's holy attitude to God's will (Hebrews 10:7).

“When they saw him afar off.”

The appearance of Joseph at Dothan presented his brethren with the opportunity they had long waited for to vent their hatred and envy. The sequence of events which followed, points with amazing accuracy to the Lord's experience from Gethsemane to Calvary.

This began with a conspiracy which was founded, not only upon hatred and envy, but disbelief — the refusal to accept Joseph's person (vv. 19-20). So it was with the Lord. He came to be accepted by faith but the response was, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:4). Joseph was stripped of his coat and cast into the pit. It was the coat which they deeply resented; they wanted to see him without it, unfavoured and humiliated. The Lord did no miracle before the high priest; there was no outward display of His power. He was the object of hatred, violence and spitting, but His weakness and humilia-

tion served only to reveal His unique character and His complete devotion. Joseph without the coat was still the son of Jacob's love.

If we can think for a moment of the empty pit with no water into which Joseph was cast, we have an idea of what the Lord's night in the presence of His people's leaders was like. It should have been one of fulness, of acceptance, of crowning but it was one emptiness. Instead of the palace — the pit. How deeply the Lord must have felt these hours as when looking over Jerusalem and weeping for that city with those anguished words, "How often I would have gathered [you] but ye would not!"

"Let not our hand be upon him". Joseph's brethren, portraying Israel's actions as a nation at the Lord's crucifixion, sold Joseph with an hypocrisy which was matched only by their cruelty (as did Judas the Lord) into the hands of the heathen. Even Reuben could not prevent this. Nor could Nicodemus, in his day (John 7:50-51). Humanly speaking, the Lord died at the hands of the Romans, not of the Jews, although their horrible cry — "His blood be upon us and upon our children" — was heard by heaven and earth. By turning Jesus over to Pilate, he was assured of the excruciating, shameful death of a common criminal.

The Lord Jesus had come from the Father's bosom to His brethren. He had revealed the Father's heart and radiated His very image, but they had taken Him and by wicked hands had crucified and slain Him (Acts 2:23). An appreciation of the Lord's sufferings in these circumstances can be gained from this story of Joseph but, as with every part of the Lord's inexpressible work, only the Father can measure its worth. It is wonderful to know that He desires us to share with Him the Person who fills His heart, and in this way desires our worship.

THE SHADOW OF PETER _____ JOHN BARNES

ACTS 5:15

The fifth chapter of Acts describes exciting times. The early days of the church were marked by signs and wonders and as he passed by even the shadow of Peter was sought as a means of blessing. May I offer a few simple musings on this expression.

1. The Shape

A man's shadow shows, more or less, the shape he is. We are too much inclined, I believe, to think of Peter's earlier days as demonstrating his rashness and his mistakes. However, those were days of formation and of growth. Peter was not then what he would be in later times. The son of Jonas who erred so plainly was to become a faithful servant of the Lord; the tough fisherman whose trade was the fish of Galilee was to become the formidable fisher of men, and sweep thousands into the kingdom of God with his busy net. Those years of learning were years of moulding, adjustment and growth. Mark tells us of the call of

Simon and he singles out the important fact that the Lord gathered the disciples to Him that "they should be *with Him* and that He might *send them forth*." Mark goes on immediately to record, "Simon he surnamed Peter". The period spent in the Lord's company was not only a time of listening to wonderful words and listening to rich unfoldings of precious truth, but a time also of being in presence of the One who *is* Truth. The apostles would, in this way, be formed by being with Him. The effect of this was seen subsequently in the strength and courage of Peter, as, now indwelt by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit who filled and worked through the Lord Jesus Himself), he fared forth into a hostile world to witness for his Lord. Although the Holy Spirit was working, He worked through Peter as a vessel of service, a vessel moulded into a certain shape for such a service. The shadow of Peter was the shape of that developed man.

2. The Substance

A shadow is cast by a substance. A shadow cannot appear by itself dissociated from some object or substance. We all like to think of the apostle Peter as a great orator, but he was not only a great speaker, he was also thoroughly in the good of what he preached. The apostles had left homes, lands, businesses and other normal interests and pursuits in order to follow and serve the Lord, so they were materially poor. However, although they had no means to speak of, they carried undreamed-of riches about with them; they were men of substance. To the crippled man who was laid daily at the gate of the temple Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none," so emphasising the material poverty of the apostolic band, "but such as I have give I thee," thus intimating the wealth available through them. It was no earthly wealth he spoke of, but of treasure which the Lord had committed to their stewardship. But the fact is that Peter *had* it; "such as *I have*". There can be no shadow thrown without a substance to cast it and the people soon discovered that the apostle Peter was not only a very articulate man but that he was also a man of substance, and that through his ministry the blessing of the Lord was available. What Peter was able to convey to the cripple was something vastly greater than a fortune in gold.

3. The Sunshine

A shadow requires light to cast the outline of its substance. When we read the brief record of Peter's service as given us in the Acts we soon become aware that a power other than his own was at work. In the case of the cripple which we have just been considering, in answer to the questions, "By what power or by what name have ye done this thing?" Peter said, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . doth this man stand before you whole". Here was the mighty Sun shining in His strength on those devoted servants casting the shadows that were of such blessing. Their enemies were forced to acknowledge that they *were with Jesus*; not only that they had been with Him but that they were with Him at that moment (cf. New Trans. Acts 4:13). The Lord Jesus was working with them (Mark 16:20), was with them always

(Matthew 28:20), illuminating their lives with His radiance and enabling them to be a blessing to those around. If we are to be of any help in our daily contacts it can only be as the light of the Lord Himself shines on us.

4. The Situation

My shadow is cast where I am. It cannot be cast in Aberdeen if I live and work in London. It is where I am that I can be of service to the Lord. The question, "Lord, where wouldst Thou have me to be?" seems to be included in the question, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me do?" Peter was, surely, where the Lord wished him to be at the time we are thinking of. Sometimes the Lord may want a man to be in his native land (Luke 8:39). He may want a woman to be in the house and to serve Him there (Mark 1:31). He may wish a servant of His to be in prison (Ephesians 3:1). He may have His reasons for His servant to be in exile (Revelation 1:9). Almost the last words of the Lord to Peter were, "Follow thou me." Peter had questioned the Lord about John and his work, but John had his labour and its sphere while Peter had his own appointed task. Each had a job peculiar to himself, a place and a service for which he was specially formed. Peter's shadow would fall where he laboured and John's in his own place of service. For each of us the blessing of service is to be where the Lord wants us to work and in the service, however lowly, for which He has fitted us. Peter's shadow was his own, not someone else's, and it fell in the place of service for which the Lord had fitted him.

WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?

*Why dost thou of the Master make request
To know thy brother's pathway to the end?
Thy business now to labour, then to rest;
Thy brother's task to go where God shall send.*

*His path may be in pleasantness and peace
And far removed from violence and strife;
But thine the struggle bitter. O then cease
To question more the Master of thy life.*

*What's that to thee? His wisdom is divine
And fully doth He know the way we take.
Then, "Follow Me," says He. Seek not a sign
But trust thy Lord the wisest plan to make.*

*To thee the pattern may appear obscure;
The cause for this or that be hard to find,
But God is working out His purpose sure,
And all proceeds according to His mind.*

*A Peter may upon a gibbet die;
A John may years of greater length attain.
What's that to thee? Follow the Saviour nigh
And thine shall be the everlasting gain.*

BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA — J. S. BLACKBURN

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Bible history has its *Peaks*, that is, periods when in the love, wisdom and power of God, and in accordance with His promise and purpose He introduces and establishes some new element in that Mount Zion to which we “are come”. To refer to three examples, mention might be made, first, of the Conquest of Canaan in Joshua; secondly, of the establishment of the glorious Kingdom in David and Solomon, and lastly, of the formation of the Church, when the Holy Spirit came down as the fruit of the victory of Christ and united believers on earth with Christ glorified in heaven. We shall try to bring out that the third is antitypical of the first; and that the Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is antitypical of the second.

The word “peak” is illustrated by the upward march of events under the intervention of God, the attainment of a summit in the road so advancing, and, sad, sad to say, a decline when the working out of the blessing is in human hands. The ascent to the peak described in the book of Joshua may be considered as beginning with the *promises* to Abraham. Stages on the road are *redemption* by the blood of the Passover Lamb; the marking out of the Israelites as a *people*, God’s people; God’s making His habitation, His *House*, among them; and, to complete the elements required, the possession by this People of the *Land* of the promise.

The fall away from the peak is marked in the following book of Judges by the introduction of the words: “and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served Baalim: and they forsook Jehovah, God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked Jehovah to anger. And they forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of Jehovah was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers . . .” (Judges 2:11-14). This decline resulted in the complete ruin of what God had set up, ruin described, after the ark was captured by the Philistines and the priest Eli died on receiving the news, when Eli’s daughter-in-law named her child “Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel” (1 Samuel 4:21).

There is the greatest encouragement from God, to be noted in its place, for faithful individuals in these times of falling away. They find

a footing against the current, and find God with them in standing against it. But our purpose here is to feed our souls on the display of what is in God, as manifested in the peaks, that is, in the setting up of what is in His own heart, in His own power and grace. That power and grace is always available to those who "hold fast" what they possess, and to meditate deeply on these is strengthening to the soul, and glorifying to God.

2. The Book of Joshua is permeated by the truth that God's people possess His written Word (1:8; 8:31-34; 22:5; 23:6; 24:26). A very striking feature of the Pentateuch is the large sections during which there is no journeying. The camp is never struck, but great details are being communicated to and through Moses. Before the end of the books of Moses, all is written in a book, making complete the Law of Jehovah. From the Passover in Exodus 12 to chapter 19 v. 1 of the same book the people journeyed, reaching Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt. There was no movement from Sinai until Numbers 10:11-13, representing a period of rather more than one year's stay. But during that year we have the ten commandments, the tabernacle, the priesthood and the offerings. This period includes the whole of the Book of Leviticus. After leaving Sinai Israel journeyed, until, after a period at Kadesh Barnea (12:16 to 20:22, where, among the legal enactments, we read of the Red Heifer) they reached a location of which the description is repeated several times, "the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho". The record of their first moving camp from this location is in Joshua 3:1. The record of their stay there includes the whole of the Book of Deuteronomy, with all its content of communication from God, and very little narrative.

The written word named the "Book of the Law" was completed. "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests (Deuteronomy 31:9). Again (*id.* 31:24) Moses "made an end of writing the words of this law in a book", and commanded the Levites to put the book in the ark.

There are references to a book (i.e. a writing) in Genesis 5:1, "this is the writing of the generation of", and so on: in Exodus 17:14, in Numbers 33:2, and in Deuteronomy 31:9-12. These Scripture facts agree closely with the existence from this time of the "Law of Moses" as the Jews understood it, and as the Lord Jesus authenticated it in Luke 24:44. The Book of Joshua is of great significance to us. It tells us of the first people who, like ourselves, were to be guided and controlled by the written Word of God. All blessing is in obedience to it — and all disaster in disobedience.

3. The Book of Joshua is above all the book of the Land of Canaan. The elements needed (apart from kingship), to complete the thoughts of God's heart of loving kindness and tender mercy towards His people were only present when they possessed the Land of Canaan. To Abraham's seed were the promises made; the posterity of Jacob became God's people after the Passover deliverance; God's habitation was provided in the wilderness; but only in Joshua do we come to the

Land. The Christian ought to allow to sweep over his or her spirit the earthly delights of the Land of Canaan, so that its spiritual counterpart in its turn may possess his heart.

The first expression of the delights of Canaan occurs in Exodus 3:8 and 17. "I will bring thee out of Egypt into a good land and a large, into a land flowing with milk and honey", and this famous phrase occurs frequently on into Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Notice the abundance conveyed in the word "flowing".

The Book of Deuteronomy provides the most exuberant description of Canaan in the immediate prospect of entering there. "For Jehovah thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land where thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayst dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless Jehovah thy God for the good land which he hath given thee" (Deuteronomy 8:7-10).

The land of Canaan was not like Egypt. Egypt was a desert, irrigated by water from its river. No one saw the great catchment areas receiving the rain from heaven far in the interior of Africa and they praised their river for their prosperity. Canaan depended, and was seen to depend, on the rain from heaven directly. It depended on God. It was a land of hills and valleys as distinct from the sands of Egypt. This contrast between Egypt and Canaan, so full of significance, is quite explicit in Deuteronomy: "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowdest thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (11:10-12).

We ought to be able to draw instruction from the meanings of names in the book of Joshua. Canaan seems to mean "low", and the word is clearly connected with humility under the hand of God. It perhaps draws attention to the feature of Canaan just mentioned, which must be reflected by the spirits of God's people in an attitude of dependence.

4. The New Testament counterpart, or the antitype of the land of Canaan is of immense importance, and perhaps it will be well to make brief mention of the position of the types of Joshua as completing those of the earlier books.

The distinct series of types of Christ's death begins with the Passover (Exodus 12). It is clearly expounded as such in the New Testament; "even 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"

(1 Corinthians 5:7,8). The passage of the Red Sea (Exodus 14) signifies baptism, and hence, "in that [Christ] died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 10:2 and Romans 6:10,11). The brazen serpent, with its message of "life for a look", closely followed by the springing well (Numbers 21), are no less distinctly interpreted in John 3:15; 4:14; 7:38,39; and Romans 8:3,4. The passage of the river Jordan (Joshua 3) is less explicitly interpreted, but we shall deal with this in detail later. At the moment we must be content with referring to Ephesians 2:5,6.

This brief illustration of the continuity in typical teaching between the Pentateuch and Joshua brings us back to the question: what is the Christian's Canaan? The most frequently expressed thought is that it is our eternal home in heaven. So many hymns so express it. "When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling, Love divine our foot shall bring". And this thought is, of course, abundantly justified. Nevertheless it is equally clear that Israel possess their Canaan in three distinct ways. (What has been written* before must be repeated at this point.) Firstly, Israel possessed Canaan by title of God's promise to Abraham. "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8). From that moment, notwithstanding the Amorites in possession, Canaan belonged to Israel. Next, they possessed it under Joshua (which possession is our present theme), in the measure in which, in battle, the soles of their feet trod upon it (Joshua 1:3). It was not complete up to the limits of the promise to Abraham, but it was their possession which lasted until the Captivity. Finally, under the kingdom of their Messiah, Israel, repentant, cleansed and forgiven, and notwithstanding more than sixty-million Arabs, will possess that land up to the full limits of God's promise to Abraham, "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates".

These three modes and times of possession correspond to three ways in which heavenly blessing can be said to belong to the Christian. Firstly, he possesses "all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3-5), and this is by God's sovereign election and predestination, before the foundation of the world. Secondly, he possesses his inheritance in heavenly places according to Ephesians 6:11,12: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to *stand* against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . wicked spirits in heavenly places". The location is the same as in 1:3, heavenly places, but now possession and enjoyment are implied in the word "stand", vv. 11 and 14. Then comes the final entrance into God's rest. In the exact context of the imperfection with which the people had attained rest under Joshua, "if Joshua had given them rest, then he would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:8,9).

Thus we see that the lesson of the Book of Joshua is so to fight

* Scripture Truth, Vol. 45, pp. 262-3.

against the wiles of the devil that we make good our foothold in the spiritual blessings in heavenly places which centre on knowing "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

Here is a justifiable simplification.

- (i) Canaan, in the earthly history of Joshua, corresponds to "heavenly places" in the spiritual teaching of Ephesians.
- (ii) The grapes of Eshcol, and all the lovely fruits of Canaan, correspond to the "spiritual blessings" of Ephesians.
- (iii) The fighting to possess Canaan in Joshua corresponds to the Christians' holy war in Ephesians 6:10-18.

I hope the reader grasps what treasures of spiritual truth, understanding, enlightenment and pure delight must be hidden in the seemingly barren lists of names delimiting the divisions of the land between the tribes detailed in the later chapters of Joshua. It has not proved an easy study in times past. Let us pray that God will give us to hear the word: "incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding. . . . If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand" (Proverbs 2:2,4).

I would also not wish it to pass without notice that, against a strong current in contemporary evangelical thought, great weight will be attached to the typical teaching of the Book of Joshua.

5. The Divisions of the Book of Joshua

I. Israel's Entrance into Canaan: 1:1 to 5:15.

Jehovah's charge to Joshua	1:1-18
Rahab and the Spies	2:1-24
Preparation and Crossing the Jordan	3:1-17
Two Memorials	4:1-24
Four Important Lessons	5:1-15

II. The Conquest of Canaan: 6:1 to 13:14.

First Victories

Sack of Jericho	6:1-27
A Trespass in the Accursed Thing	7:1-26
Sack of Ai	8:1-29
A copy of the Law of Moses	8:30-35

The Conquest of the South

The Wiles of Gibeon	9:1-27
Adoni-zedec King of Jerusalem	10:1-43

The Conquest of the North

Jabin King of Hazor	11:1-14
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Summaries of Conquests

Conquering the Whole Land	11:15-23
List of the Kings Smitten	12:1-24
The Land Remaining	13:1-7

III. The Division of Canaan: 13:8 to 22:34.

The Two-and-a-Half Tribes	13:8-33
Survey for the Nine-and-a-Half Tribes	14:1-5

At Gilgal

Caleb's Request	14:6-15
Judah's Lot	15:1-12
Caleb, Achsah and Othniel	:13-19
Judah's Lot Completed	:20-63
Joseph's Lots: Ephraim and Manasseh	16:1-17:18

At Shiloh

Lots of the Remaining Seven Tribes	18:1-19:48
Joshua's Inheritance	19:49-51

Other Arrangements

The Cities of Refuge	20:1-9
The Levites' Cities	21:1-45
Two-and-a-Half Tribes Go Home	22:1-34

IV. Joshua's Age and Death 23:1 to 24:33.

Joshua's First Address	23:1-16
Joshua's Second Address	24:1-25
The Great Stone)	
Joshua's Death)	24:26-33
Joseph's Bones)	

SHADOWS OF THE SAVIOUR ————— **GORDON KELL****3. THE PASSOVER LAMB**

The Passover Lamb's character and history, recorded in Exodus 12, typify in a remarkable way Christ *sacrificed*. The truth of this is confirmed by John the Baptist's announcement, "Behold the Lamb of God . . ." (John 1:29,36) and the apostle Paul's declaration, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

When the children of Israel cried to God to deliver them from slavery in Egypt, he appeared to Moses and spoke some of the most beautiful and promise-filled words in the Old Testament. "I have *seen* the affliction of my people . . . and have *heard* their cry. . . . I *know* their sorrows and *I am come down* to deliver them" (see Exodus 3:7-10).

Although the spirit of those words went far beyond the immediate need that Israel was experiencing, their fulfillment is outlined in Exodus 11:14.

Following the dramatic and frightening display of His power in the plagues that Egypt suffered, God was ready to execute His final judgement, and at the same time save Israel. This is the setting of the Passover feast. The instructions God gave regarding the Passover Lamb that was the centre of the feast may be divided in the following way to help us see the portrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ:—

- v. 5 The Lamb was *faultless* and of the first year.
- v. 5 The Lamb was *taken* from the sheep or goats.
- v. 6 The Lamb was *kept* four days.
- v. 6 The Lamb was *killed* before the whole congregation.

- v. 7 The Lamb's *blood* was placed on the doorposts.
- v. 8 The Lamb was *eaten* roast with fire.
- v. 10 The Lamb was *burnt* with fire.

Faultless

A lamb was a common creature among the Israelites, who were a nation of shepherds, but the Passover Lamb was not. This animal had to be faultless; no limp, no disease, no wound, not even a scar. God's very first thought was to represent the best. This is reinforced by the phrase, "of the first year", or, "a year old". As well as being a perfect specimen, the lamb was not to be immature but full of life, energy and value.

In this way Christ at the beginning of his public ministry is represented firstly as the perfect holy Son of God but also as a thirty-year-old man, of the age at which Israelite men were able to enter into the full responsibilities of service. God used John the Baptist to herald Christ at this stage in His life, as He used others to bear public testimony at His birth, circumcision, end of childhood and death. "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Taken and Kept

Christ's humanity and public ministry are emphasised by the two words in our passage, "taken and kept". The Lamb was taken from among the sheep and the goats; it stood out amongst many like Isaiah's "root out of dry ground". Nevertheless it bore the form of the other animals. In Philippians we read Jesus "was made in the likeness of men", and after being hidden for thirty years (save for the few occasions mentioned above) He was taken out of obscurity and presented publicly to Israel. That public ministry lasted three years during which time Christ's character was universally displayed. This period is carefully portrayed in the four days in which the Passover Lamb was kept. The lamb was there for all to see its flawless nature and appreciate its value.

Death and Witness

After the choosing of a perfect animal and the displaying of its perfection we come to the climax of the instructions. "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." The animal by its very nature represented willingness, gentleness, goodness, guiltlessness, preciousness, and beauty. The last response to that character was death, yet how powerfully God uses this picture to direct each of our hearts to the sacrifice of Christ. Pilate on three occasions presented Jesus to the Jewish nation with the words, "I find no fault in Him". The response to that testimony was, "Crucify Him, crucify Him", and upon the cross of Calvary God's Lamb was killed "before the whole congregation". When Christ had died it appeared that Satan and man could inflict no other ignominy upon Him, but the soldier, in a last act of maliciousness, plunged his spear into Christ's side, as the Scripture records, "bringing a sudden flow of blood and water". The shed blood! In Exodus we see the lamb slain and the blood upon the

door posts, its value protecting everyone within the house. We see also God's appreciation of that blood, that sacrifice. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." We benefit by faith in the sacrificed Christ, we praise and worship God for Him, but sometimes our *assurance* may falter. Let us be clear upon this one thing, that God's estimation of the sacrifice which His Son has made never diminishes or falters and it is the basis of the whole of His new creation.

Eaten and burnt

Although the main theme of this "shadow" is Christ as the great sacrifice, the subject cannot be left without comment upon the unique position we have been brought into, to appreciate that sacrifice as a company.

At the Passover the people ate the lamb when it was "roast with fire". This is a picture of our appreciation by faith of the Saviour who suffered the judgement of God for us, of which the fire speaks. It was eaten with unleavened bread. Leaven invariably speaks of evil in the Scriptures, and to share in this feast there had to be a separation from it. Similarly, as we gather to the Lord's name there should be a personal and collective separation from that which is evil. The Lamb was eaten "with bitter herbs", reminding us that "Christ suffered for us"; it was our sins which took Him to the cross. It was eaten as a family, and so we gather as one body to remember Christ's sacrifice. It was eaten in haste and those who partook of the feast were ready to leave, showing us that we remember the Lord at His table "till He come", and we should be ready, waiting and expecting that coming.

Finally, what was left of the sacrifice was burnt, and as they left Egypt to go into the promised land there was no trace left of the sacrificed lamb. It is a very solemn thing to realise that when the church has been taken out of the world the testimony which God now gives of His grace in the sacrificed lamb shall be removed. God at enormous cost has sacrificed the Lord Jesus; to that sacrifice He expects us to respond, *now*.

FELLOW-WORKERS WITH PAUL ————— T. D. SPICER

7. ONESIMUS

The last picture which we had of the Apostle Paul at the close of the Acts of the Apostles is of his arrival in Rome. Here, we read, he "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30,31).

A Prisoner

The optimistic tone of these words is remarkable and we cannot help wishing that the narrative had not been so abruptly broken off. It would have been of interest to know whom the Apostle met in the

Imperial city and to have read of his conversations. "Two whole years" is quite a long time and although the Apostle was a prisoner he was far from having lost his freedom of speech and action: indeed his Roman imprisonment seems to have allowed greater liberty and more comfort than the earlier one at Caesarea (Acts 24:27). It was true that a soldier was chained to him as a constant companion; and Paul alludes to this when he addresses the Jews who met him on his arrival, "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20).

Although we do not have a direct and complete account of this imprisonment, we have in the passage and elsewhere enough information for us to appreciate his activity during these "two whole years". We see, for instance, that large numbers of people came to him, and the frequent changing of the soldier who guarded him must have meant that he made the acquaintance of quite a large number of the armed forces. Moreover, in spite of the limitations on travel, there were no restrictions on writing; and we know that at this time he wrote the Epistles to Philippi, Ephesus and Colosse; besides the personal letter to Philemon.

From these letters we learn of the companions of the apostle during this time. At the close of the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, for instance, we have the names of Luke and Aristarches (Colossians 4:10, 14; Philemon 24). Here also is Demas, who afterwards fell away through that love of the world, which is still the enemy of Christ. We read also of Mark, now called a "fellow-worker unto the kingdom of God" and a "comfort" to the apostle; though earlier he had "departed" from Paul and "not gone with him to the work" (Acts 13:13; 15:38). Turning to the Epistle to the Philippians written later, it would appear that Luke has left him, while Timothy is now with him (Philippians 1:1; 2:19). This large circle of acquaintance at Rome is full of interest and from each of these four epistles we can single out one friend and co-worker of Paul concerning whom, at this period, we have quite full information.

We open the Letter to Colosse and find, near the beginning, Epaphras, the apostle's "dear fellowservant" (Colossians 1:7). If Epaphras is the link with Colosse, then Tychicus, "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord", holds the same relation with the Church at Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21, 22). From the Philippian letter we have Epaphroditus, "my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier . . ." (Philippians 2:25). Then there is Onesimus whose fault and repentance gave the occasion for the matchless letter addressed to Philemon; and it is to him that we will now turn our attention.

A Bondman

Among the inhabitants of the Roman Empire there existed a class of people, extremely numerous and widespread, of which we have no experience. In the city of Rome probably half of the population consisted of slaves, the greater part of the industrial labour was in their hands and quite often they were highly educated. They might be bought, taken as captives in war, or be born of slave parents in the

household of their masters. A bondman had no legal personality; he was merely a living machine and seen as belonging to a man in the same way as the cattle on his farm, or his household and personal effects. The inevitable characteristics of slaves in the Roman Empire were theft and falsehood; and, when possible, conspiracy. Seneca, a contemporary of the apostle, says, "show me how many slaves there are, and I will show you how many enemies we have". A runaway slave might well lose his life if re-captured, for his master had the right of life or death over him. Although slaves were in an unenviable position, they were, as the above shows, important members of society and met at every turn.

The story of Onesimus is soon told. He was the slave of Philemon at Colosse, a town situated in Phrygia, which was reputed to be a slave-producing region. He had robbed his master and run away; and, in the end, had found his way to Rome to lose himself in the crowds of the great city. There, by some chain of events, he had met with the apostle Paul and through his teaching and influence had become a believer. Now he was about to be reconciled with his master, and this provided the occasion of this most courteous and lovely letter. Paul had to deal with a delicate subject and he does so with great skill and Christian tact.

A Changed Man

The character of the runaway slave, at the time of our introduction to him, can be summed up briefly: he was a changed man. "Begotten" to a new and spiritual life by Paul "in his bonds" at Rome, he has become the brother of both the apostle himself and the master who had been wronged. We find these new relationships briefly, and yet strongly expressed. Writing to the Colossians Paul says he is sending Tychicus "with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother"; and then he adds a most suggestive hint to the Christians at Colosse, "who is one of you" (Colossians 4:9). So he who had been the slave of Philemon is now made the "brother" of the saints. He who had been a thief is now worthy of the highest trust. To the apostle in Rome he is so dear that he speaks of him as his "very heart", and "his very self" (Philemon 12, 17). Onesimus has indeed become such a useful member of the community that he might take Philemon's own place in assisting the apostle; if only it were right to retain him without permission (Philemon 14).

As regards Philemon, Onesimus is now, though still bound to him by the tie of earthly service, a true spiritual brother. The runaway to him is even more than he is to the Apostle. It is assumed that he is doubly dear to him, "both in the flesh and in the Lord" (Philemon 16). The matter is summed up by a play on words which is lost in our translation. The Greek word "Onesimus" means "profitable" or "useful"; and, knowing this, we discover a confidence expressed in the saying that he who was "in time past . . . unprofitable" to Philemon is "now profitable to him as well as to Paul" (Philemon 11).

Masters and Slaves

One of the great influences of Christianity has been the emancipation of the slave. How? Not by telling him of his rights, nor inflaming his indignation against his oppressors. This would have made Christ's kingdom a "kingdom of this world" (John 18:36); it would have given licence to insurrection. The true solution was Christian love, such as was encouraged by the apostle in his letters from Rome, which would bring a change of heart in both the master and the slave. It would soften the affections of the master and create him in a spirit of justice; at the same time the slave would be raised to a sense of duty, giving him also a hope. So the slave would lose his vices and become loyal, truthful and honest; and the master considerate, kind and just. So it was in time that slavery died, as it were, a natural death.

This we should not fail to notice illustrates what Paul has to say in general of the duties of masters and slaves. In the Colossian epistle these duties are laid down (Colossians 3:22; 4:1), and as these injunctions were obeyed in the right spirit, so a reconciliation would take place between two otherwise hostile sections of the community; and just as already "Greek and Jew" were made one, so — to quote again the same Epistle — "bond and free" were made one (Colossians 3:11). In this the Apostle is perfectly consistent. He does not urge Onesimus to insist on separation from his master, or even to demand his freedom. On the contrary, he sends him back. He may give a suggestion to Philemon, and may confidently express a hope that he will do "even more" than the apostle says; but the duty of Onesimus is clear. All is left to the operation of true Christian principle in the two men, according to their circumstances.

Again, this agrees with what Paul wrote to Corinth, that each man is willingly to abide in that calling where the Gospel has found him. Is he called, being a slave? Then he is to use his servile position all the more readily that in it he may honour Christ: for this is the correct interpretation of the passage (1 Corinthians 7:21, 22).

Onesimus seems to have caught the true spirit of this great lesson. He has a full sense of the wrong done to Philemon, and is in no wise unwilling to return to Colosse, although the outcome is by no means certain.

What was the outcome? Did Philemon welcome Onesimus back? We can only speculate. If Philemon had not opened his hand and his heart to the runaway, would this tender appeal from the apostle Paul have been preserved? There is also a letter written some fifty years later in which Ignatius refers to the Bishop of Ephesus whose name was Onesimus. Coincidence? Perhaps — who can tell?

SOME BETTER THING ————— T. BALDERSTON

3. NOT UNTO ANGELS: HEBREWS 2

Verses 1-4 of Chapter 2 form the first of three clearly defined interruptions of the flow of the writer's argument, in which he turns what he has just taught to account in his fight against apathy and apostasy. Interruptions to his argument they may be, but they are vital constituents of this "word of exhortation" (13:22) as the writer terms his epistle. Each of them precedes an important new stage of his argument, and the writer marks them off by his own kind of "brackets", namely, that a key word in the argument of the following section marks the beginning and end of each of them. In this first case the word is "angels"; in the second, "High Priest" (2:17, 4:14); and in the third, "Melchisedek" (5:10, 6:20).

From the siting of this first "interruption" we are instructed that the primary antidote to apathy and apostasy is the truth itself of the Godhead glory of Christ. It is no mere theoretical teaching! We also learn that the teaching of chapter 1 must enter our souls if the teaching of chapter 2 is to be understood. This teaching will be the climax of the whole section that began at 1:4; the excellent glories of the name of *Son* have been laid out in the first chapter to sharpen our sensibility of His humiliation in the second. Perhaps the readers had been reproached (13:13) for the honours they paid to a Man. The whole section is designed to make His manhood their great joy, because He freely took it to inherit all things, and *by sufferings* to permit those who were never anything more than earthbound people to partake of the sovereignty of heaven, and a place before the very face of God.

For (2:5) should be taken seriously. It refers immediately back to 2:1-4, adding further reason for heeding what *the Lord* spoke. It refers also (though not principally, as some hold) to 1:14, explaining why angels serve the heirs of salvation. But it refers above all to 1:4-14 as a whole, bringing to a point the argument of that section about the subordination of angels to Christ.

Not unto angels. The present world, though committed to Adam before the fall, is also in some mysterious manner subject to angels. They were the intermediaries in the giving of the Law (2:2), and, as Daniel and Revelation show, their government is especially characteristic of the "Times of the Gentiles". But not so the world to come! Readers who had just read chapter 1 were in no doubt of the identity of the Sovereign of that "world". It is the manner in which He will take up His inheritance that is to be the subject.

Whereof we speak. Actually, "the world to come" has hardly been an explicit topic up to this point and, though it surfaces briefly with Psalm 8, it will thereafter slip into the background. By this phrase, however, the writer indicates the unspoken link between the Scriptures he has quoted and the one he is about to quote: they are millennial (cp. 1 Corinthians 15:22-28).

For one in a certain place. The studied vagueness of this phrase

underlines the writer's extremely high view of inspiration. Human author and position within Scripture pale into insignificance before the fact that it *is* the Word of God. Such is Scripture's witness about itself!

What is man? Opinions differ about the use to which the writer puts Psalm 8. One very common view states that the chief point of this chapter is that the "world to come" has been subjected to man as such (strictly, the redeemed portion of mankind). This is what the writer deduces from the Psalm; it has no particular reference to Jesus. This view, then, understands the "him" in verse 8 as "man". But, of course, (the interpretation goes on), man will only come into his dominion through the sufferings and exaltation of Jesus, and this is shown from verse 9 onwards.

Although this interpretation is reflected in several recent translations, it misplaces the emphasis of the chapter. This chapter does, of course, teach the above, but its *main* subject is not man in general (in which case it would be clumsily inserted between chapter 1 and the rest of the epistle), but *Jesus*. The conclusion to which the first two chapters tend is, "Wherefore . . . consider *Jesus*" (3:1). In any case, the Holy Spirit indicates in 1 Corinthians 15:27, and in Ephesians 1:22, that the Psalm speaks primarily of Christ personally.

It is better therefore to say that the Psalm as quoted here speaks directly of Christ, and that from this understanding (commencing at v. 10) the writer argues to a wider meaning in the "many sons". The readers knew well that Christ was the Ruler of the "world to come". The point of the Psalm is to emphasise that He will rule it as *Man*. On first sight the Psalm is ill-adapted to the writer's point; it speaks of angels, but, so far from denying their sovereignty over the world to come, it speaks of the Son of man's being "made a little lower" than they. This difficult phrase is however exactly why the writer quoted the Psalm. He devotes ten of the chapter's eighteen verses to expounding why the One whose Name, according to chapter 1, entitled Him to a place above angels, should be made inferior to them.

For in that he put all in subjection under him (v. 8). The inspired writer's first task, in interpreting the Psalm, is to emphasise a wider connotation of the "all things" it speaks about than the readers might have been used to. Adam was set over the earth only (Genesis 1:28, cp. Psalm 115:16), but God *left nothing that is not put under* the Man of Psalm 8. This shows that this "man" cannot be man in general. For in that case, neither the immediate context of the Psalm, nor the rest of Scripture, would give any warrant for so wide a connotation. "All things" would then be defined and limited by "a little lower than the angels". But the context of Scriptures pertaining to the Son (quoted in chapter 1) will permit of no other connotation with reference to Him to whom not the world to come only, but even angels, are subject. The Holy Ghost gave this connotation of "all things" also in 1 Corinthians 15:27 and in Ephesians 1:22.

It is important to the writer to emphasise that *now we see not yet all things put under him* (v. 9). The writer wishes to reaffirm (lest the Psalm seem to contradict it) that we are in the time defined by Psalm

110:1. This fact was just his readers' problem, but the writer wants to teach them that this present time which they find irksome defines, in a special way, a relationship which they have with Christ where He is now, in the heavenly sanctuary, and that this, rather than any place they looked for with Him in the "day of His power" (Psalm 110:3) was to govern their present behaviour in the world.

We do *see* (not here by inward spiritual illumination, but by the faith that is the evidence of things not seen and that rests on the Word of God — 11:1-3) at this present time *Jesus* in fulfillment of two other phrases of the Psalm — "made a little lower than the angels" (the Hebrew says "gods") and, "crowned with glory and honour". *Jesus* is positioned emphatically in the sentence to underline that the emphasis is different from what it had been in chapter 1. In chapter 1 the emphasis was that Jesus the Messiah is *Son of God*. Here it is that the Son at God's right hand is *Jesus*, the One who was made a little lower than the angels. It is the same Person sitting in the same place. The "glory and honour" must be interpreted by those other passages in chapter 1 that speak of Him. It is His glory at God's right hand.

Now we can see the ulterior reason for the comparison with angels in the first chapter. It is to press home the paradox of this Psalm. Why is He whose Name (according to chapter 1) entitles Him to a glory and Honour above the angels said to be "some little inferior" to them? And how can His status as Man, below angels, be compatible with the subjection to Him, as Man, of all things, including angels? Now we reach the climax of the first two chapters.

To answer this, the writer turns to a great fact about which the Psalm is silent. The Son of God became Man to enter into the inheritance foreordained for Him as Man, not directly, but indirectly, through *the suffering of death*. Note the phrase. He *suffered* death. He *tasted* it. No epistle speaks as plainly of the Lord's sufferings as this one. It is the suffering of death that resolves the disagreement between the two phrases in the Psalm. *On account of it* He had to be "made a little lower than the angels", but equally *on account of it* He has now been (according to His Manhood) "crowned with glory and honour" far above the angels, for He has done a work angels could never do.

He had to suffer death, because the great counsel of God, not merely to restore the creatorial order in which Adam had dominion over the earth, but to transcend it by a better order where the Son of man has dominion over all things, hinged upon His *tasting death for everything* ("everything", referring back to the "all things" of the Psalm is preferable to "every man"). A *Man* had to purge the entire creation from the effects of the sin of man. No other man could do it, but *by the grace of God* He did it — a Man for man.

Verse 10 develops the thought which the phrase, *by the grace of God*, begins (the "Him" in this verse seems to pick up from "God" in that phrase). This is that grace of God that brings *many sons to glory*! Nothing but the uncaused kindness of God could decree that a class of those people who had forfeited their original status under Adam should then be marked out for a far higher status under Christ. But God is God. His gracious plan — the subjection of *all things* to these

men under Christ — must serve His own perfect pleasure. If His grace decreed the destiny, His glory must determine the means. Those who are being brought to glory are to be made *all of one* with His Son (according to His manhood (v.11)). This phrase does not mean, “He made Himself exactly like them”, but, “He has placed them in the same relationship to God as He — as Man — enjoys”. Who are the people who are thus identified with Him? Not everybody. That would not *become God*. Only those whom Christ’s sufferings have sanctified can thus be identified with Him. It became the majesty of the God who determined so high, so very high a place for these men, that when Christ, their Leader, was perfected (i.e. exalted to glory and honour), He was made *perfect through sufferings* that could make the sanctified fit for the place of access that the Sanctifier has, and that could give the Sanctifier an irreproachable understanding of the difficulties faced by the sanctified on their journey there. Such sufferings that became (not *us*, but) *God* cannot fail to bring us there.

This understanding of Christ’s sufferings is not, however, opened up until vv. 16-18. At this point the simple statement of them serves the indispensable purpose of unlocking a wider meaning in the Psalm than it could otherwise have sustained. Children of Adam could not have been lifted up to glory and honour above angels and before the face of God except by the deep perfection of the sufferings of Christ.

The writer does not rest his wider interpretation on inference alone. Before he proceeds to expound the “sufferings that sanctify”, he pauses to establish *from Scripture* that Christ, having become Man, associates a class of men with Himself. The first quotation — from Psalm 22:22 — establishes that, as having come through death but before the time of His public display (see context), there is a people whom before God *He is not ashamed to call [His] brethren*. The second and third are from Isaiah 8:17-18 and establish the other side of the coin, namely, that He identifies Himself with them on the path of faith, and in the face of a hostile and unregenerate Israel.

With verses 14-15 the chapter approaches its magnificent conclusion. The “oneness” or “fellowship” of the “children” (referring back to v. 13) is most basically that all of them are *flesh and blood*. In them, however, flesh and blood is mortal. “Death is the market where everyone meets”; their brief lives have nothing in common so much as the death that abruptly ends them. Accordingly He voluntarily* participated in that same nature, yet not so as to unite Himself with them in their pre-death condition (as many falsely teach). In Him flesh and blood was not sinful (4:15), and therefore, assuredly, not subject to death (Romans 5:12). Nevertheless He took flesh and blood that He might freely *choose* to die, because they die. He did it to free them from the power and the fear of death. The devil has the power and creates the fear; he it was who led the first parents of mankind into sin, and death by sin. But Christ’s atoning death cancelled the curse of death for those whose cause He has taken up; it

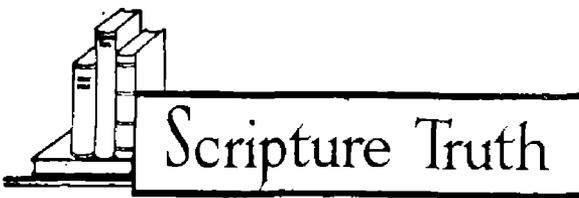
*The change of verse and tense is said to signify this; see too the footnote here to the New Trans. of J.N.D.

pacifies their accusing consciences so that, (as has been well said) while Christians may not be exempted from the physiological fear of *dying*, they ought not to be carrying round guilty consciences, and morai fear and insecurity in the face of *death*. Christ has removed the darkness that death places as a boundary to the hopes of people naturally (even, indeed, of many O.T. saints); He has put the light of the glory where He already is in its place, for by death He has put His brethren, as He is, beyond the curse of death.

Now the writer can tie up the comparison with angels (v. 16). It is obvious (*for verily*) that He has not taken up their cause. Angels do not die, so death cannot help them. In the comparison with angels (unlike all the comparisons with men which follow) no similarities are to be found, only contrasts. He is greater than them and became less, that He might again surpass them. That He "bypassed them twice" simply serves to emphasise that He has *taken up the cause* (not of men generally, but) *of seed of Abraham*. Nothing in the context speaks against our taking this literally: the original readers were Jews. But the article is omitted, to underline that they were "seed of Abraham" *characteristically*: they were of that remnant, prefigured by Isaiah's "children", that believed in a rejected Christ. And in the wider context of Scripture it will embrace *all* that believe (Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:16, 29).

He has not undertaken their cause cheaply. He has made it His all absorbing task. The way He has taken it up is as High Priest, specifically, as High Priest on the Day of Atonement when he represented the people before God. Now at last we reach an exposition of "the sufferings that sanctify". A High Priest can only represent people with whom he himself is identified. He had first to be *made in all things like unto his brethren* (see especially Kelly, *Exposition*, p. 47). Having identified Himself with them especially in death He can now act *for* them (i) as a *faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God*, entering into the heavenly sanctuary itself in the power of the blood of His propitiation, that He might establish His people's right to be presented there before the face of God as He Himself is there (9:24), and (ii) as a *merciful High Priest*, reaching down from His present seat in the glory with delivering aid to His brethren who, on their journey to the glory, *are tempted*. The sufferings that made Him *in all things like unto His brethren* equipped Him for this service also, for there above all *He suffered being tempted*. (All readers should be acquainted with the remarks on this verse in the *Synopsis* of J.N.D.).

What He (who sanctifies) enjoys in heaven belongs to us too: what we (who are sanctified — sin therefore excepted) experience on earth, He feels as well. Now we see why He was "made a little lower than the angels". The "world to come" has slipped from view. It has but provided the platform from which Christ Himself becomes the single object of sight — in all that He is as God and Man, in all that He has done and in His *present* relationships to those He leads to glory. "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, *Jesus*" (3:1).



(incorporating *Words of Help*)

JANUARY, 1981

WALKING WITH GOD _____ JOHN BARNES

1 Thessalonians 4:1

Walking with God, or, before Him, is a matter which is alluded to in the book of Genesis concerning four of the patriarchs. We have a reference also in the Hebrews to Enoch and to the fact that he "pleased God". These two thoughts are found together in the verse we look at and suggest a number of points.

1. Pilgrimage

The idea of "walking" seems to imply purpose. A man who is walking is generally going somewhere in particular. If he is walking with God he is going where God is going, so to speak. The thought of God going somewhere may seem a little incongruous but is it really so? God is busy! He has His grand design, His purpose. Paul tells the Ephesians that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will". He is going on undeviatingly towards the completion of what He has in His mind to do and nothing will interrupt His progress. That Enoch was, in some degree, in the secret of God's plan is clear from his prophecy, recorded for the first time, we believe, in Jude's short but detailed letter. As Enoch "walked with God", he moved on with God towards the great culmination He had before His mind from eternal ages.

2. Partnership

The word "fellowship", which is used a fair number of times in the N.T., often seems to convey the idea of "partnership". In the prophecy of Amos (3:3) God raises the important question, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" While the application of this scripture to the individual is undoubtedly valid its primary message seems to relate to Israel and the Lord. There could be no partnership because Israel was not in agreement with the Lord. The nation occupied a greatly favoured place. God had redeemed them from bondage and brought them up out of Egypt (Amos 3:1). He had established them in a unique relationship with Himself that no other people on earth enjoyed (3:2). Now, as a nation, they were out of touch with God and His thoughts and there was no basis for fellowship. God maintained His links with faithful individuals but the nation walked away from the Lord. How precious to God was the little group spoken of by Malachi, who, amid general apostasy, clung to the Lord

and the things that were dear to His heart (Malachi 3:16-17)! This formed the basis of a partnership which the Lord Himself valued.

3. Progress

When we walk, each step takes us a little further. In this chapter (1 Thessalonians 4) Paul speaks of his desire that the saints, in their daily walk, should abound more and more. Each step, taken in the right direction, promotes this desirable result. When Abraham left Ur for Canaan he allowed himself to be halted for a while in Haran (Genesis 11:31). However, after his father's death, his exercises were stirred up and he resumed his interrupted journey (12:5). Having reached the land he continued to move forward, "going on still . . ." (12:9). Here is the thought of progress. This great man made mistakes (who doesn't?) but the Lord valued his fellowship as he walked before Him, went on with Him and progressed in the knowledge of Him. Paul's desire for Timothy was that he should go on. "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned . . ." was his counsel. Isaac was a believer who made progress. "The man waxed great and went forward and grew until he became very great" (Genesis 26:13). One of Paul's sorrows concerning the Corinthians was that they had remained in immaturity and not made progress (1 Corinthians 3).

4. Pleasure for God

Paul was anxious that the Thessalonians should walk so as to please God (4:1). In Malachi 3 where we read of the remnant who thought on the Lord's name, we are told of the touching fact that "the Lord hearkened and heard it". Some students of Hebrew believe that the verb translated "hearken" means "to bend down and listen", as though to hear a barely audible whisper. What the Lord heard, though faint, was of pleasure to Him and He caused a book of remembrance to be written before Him for them that feared the Lord. When I was a young Christian the older brethren used to say, that "remnant character is that which maintains first principles in end times"; this was true of the remnant in Malachi's time. God will not abandon His thought. If, in the days of apostasy, what He cherishes is largely given up, He will take pleasure in those, however feeble, who cling to His thought and who value what He values.

Enoch lived in such times, but in them he pleased God. The verb used in Hebrews 11 "had" is probably better rendered "has"; Enoch *has* this testimony, that he pleased God. The testimony of the Lord to His abiding pleasure is no dusty fragment from a decaying manuscript, of antiquarian interest only; it is a living testimony, just as the book of remembrance is a living record.

5. Power

We need strength to walk. As we consider the opposing forces at work in the world and in the professing church, and are conscious of our own great weakness, we may ask, Where shall I find the power to walk this demanding path? The power must come from God and I

Thessalonians 4:8 points out most clearly that He has given us His Spirit. The path is one that requires that conditions in those who tread it are in conformity with the infinite holiness of the divine Person with whom we walk. We cannot, of ourselves, provide this conformity, so He has made this provision for us by giving us His Holy Spirit. God said to Abraham, "Walk before me . . . be thou perfect". Had this demand come to him on its own he might well have been aghast at it, but the Lord most graciously prefixed a word of wonderful power. "I am the Almighty God." The character of the walk He required of His servant was rooted in what He was in Himself for His servant; what He would be for Him. "I am . . . be thou." What a resource! The Almightyness of the Lord was available for this frail man to enable him to walk before the Lord in the integrity, dignity and maturity such a path demanded.

The Thessalonians had lived and walked in wantonness and corruption but they were to remember the character of the God before whom they walked and to do so in the power of His Holy Spirit.

6. Provision

The Thessalonians were taught of God. It is not in our nature to know how to be pleasing to God; we need to be taught of Him. Clearly love lies at the centre of this, and it must necessarily be so, for "God is love". One of the charming thoughts of Scripture is that God does not hide things from those He loves and who respond to His love. For example, He would not hide from Abraham what were His plans concerning the cities of the plain. On more than one occasion we find God communing with this "believer" (Genesis 15:6) and communicating His mind to him. What an education! How else could he have known of Christ's day or of the city of God? Enoch was an instructed man. Indeed his name is understood to mean, "Tuition". By divine enlightenment he was able to bridge an enormous gap in time and envisage the coming of the Lord with His saints.

7. Prospect

Every path goes somewhere. It is solemn to remember this fact. "The course of this world", a path in which we once walked, empowered by that evil spirit which still works in the children of disobedience, will ultimately reach its unthinkable end, a fate from which grace has rescued us. As believers we are privileged to tread a pathway which has a bright and happy prospect. "The path of the just is as a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day". The path lies through the difficulties of the present moment, very difficult for some of our brethren — then, suddenly, glory! The suggestion seems to be there in the record of Enoch. "Enoch walked with God — and he was not for God took him". His history was that of a walk with God and his destiny was glory with God. This happy chapter leads us in thought to that great meeting in the air when the saints caught up together shall be for ever with the Lord. As we think of this prospect, of the Person who will come with an assembling shout to gather us to Himself, and of the holy place to which He will, Himself, conduct us,

we can easily see how essential is the teaching by which the chapter begins. While we remain here in a world marked by corruption and dishonour, we are to walk so that our testimony to the world is unmarred by its own features. "That ye walk honourably towards them that are without" (v. 12). We shall soon be "within" the Father's house with all its joys, to be for ever with Him who won it all for us and it is His will that, with that in view, we should be walking here in a way that will bring pleasure to God.

BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA — J. S. BLACKBURN

2. JEHOVAH'S CHARGE TO JOSHUA: CHAPTER 1

The first part of the charge, while being addressed personally and privately to Joshua, has its application in the plural and concerns "all this people" (vv. 2-4). The second part is in the singular, and contains commands presenting the actions and qualities required in the Leader (5-9). The rest of the chapter tells how Joshua communicated the reveille to the officers, and especially to the Reubenites, the Gadites and to the half tribe of Manasseh (10-18).

v. 1 The Lion of Judah has been couched on the banks of Jordan (to quote Dr. Edersheim), since the events of Numbers 22:1. Then it was that Israel "pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho", and the point from which the first moves were made under Joshua was the portion of the larger location lying nearest to the river. How long the Israelite camp has remained there we cannot say, and stirring events have taken place. The incident marking the end of the delay, and indeed marking the end of the Book of the Law, has now occurred — the death of Moses. Action of a new kind is now to take place, action to which almost every page of the Book of the Law has looked forward. This action must be under Joshua, the new Leader, and it is to him that the word of Jehovah immediately comes, so that from the beginning he may not move without a word from God.

v. 2 The simple facts dividing the wilderness journey from the conquest of Canaan were the death of Moses and the crossing of Jordan, and Jehovah's word made the reason and the action exquisitely clear. "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give unto them."

On the scale of merely human history, Moses must have claims to be the most illustrious man who ever lived: sole and effective leader of a mass migration of six hundred thousand men, with the women and children, for forty years: the only writer in the second millennium B.C. whose work generally and across the nations is printed, sold and read with avidity at the end of the second millennium A.D.: lawgiver whose code has influenced every code since his time. The divine estimate is, of course much more important: "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face". The passing of

such a man, and the entrance of Joshua into an enterprise so entirely unknown, as sole leader, must be a moment for pause and earnest consideration. The fact is, and must be understood, that in spite of undimmed eye and unabated natural force, Moses cannot bring Israel into Canaan. The importance of this fact for the Christian, is to be seen in the type. The law has no place in giving us entrance into the spiritual blessings in heavenly places. The purpose of God above all dispensation, and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and his taking His seat on high, are the ground on which such blessing can be ours. The law is holy and just and good, but could never give life. Only the risen and ascended Lord can lead us in, and of Him Joshua is the type.

Care is needed to distinguish what was true for Israel and Canaan from what belongs to the Christian and his spiritual blessings. Israel did enter in under the covenant of law, and hence they could not fully possess. The book of the Law which was to be Joshua's ceaseless study, represents for us "the word of Christ dwelling in us richly" (Colossians 3:16).

The second sentence of the verse contains the command, and every phrase is a trumpet call. The first of Scripture's numerous commands to "arise" is God's direction to Abraham: "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:17). Perhaps in the setting, Abraham's walk was determined in its extent by v.14 of the same chapter, rather than 15:18. In its place the patient and detailed survey involved in Abraham's placing the soles of his feet across the length and breadth of the land is perhaps another and necessary call to action for the Christian, but in our chapter it is possession and not survey which comes before us. *Arise* Joshua! Strike the camp; marshal the host; order the march; there is much to do.

The immediate action was not complicated. They were to cross the mystic barrier, to take up a position *in the land*. The action was decisive, and from that moment, they were committed. Many, many Christians are satisfied with the life in which we experience the guidance of God, the divine provision, and indeed the presence of God with them in their earthly circumstances, and in the service appropriate to such life. All these things constitute the life typified by the wilderness journey. Such experiences are good, very good. But it could not be more clear and compelling that is not God's *purpose* for His people. The clarity of the difference is so vivid, so inescapable, as illuminated by these types, that it is small wonder that if we wish to be satisfied with the life of the wilderness, we will not wish to believe in typical teaching. To take up a position in Canaan is to experience the illumination by which we perceive as something open to be enjoyed by us, our union with Christ in heavenly places with all its tremendous consequences centred on Ephesians 5:25 (b) - 27 and 3:19. Such perceptions are the first step to possessing our entitlement. Such are the reasons for the precedence of the prayer of Ephesians chapter one over that of chapter three.

The demonstrative "this" is a gently compelling feature in this

chapter. In v. 4 we find "this Lebanon"; in v. 8 "this book of the law"; and twice, vv. 2 and 11, "this Jordan". It is difficult to escape the impression that the objects so marked out were visible before their eyes. Suffice for the moment to note this emphasis. The significance of the river in these types will come before us in chapter 3.

vv. 3-5 These verses are a quotation of Deuteronomy 11:24-25(a), and put Joshua under the same promise and assurance as was Moses, regarding the limits of their conquest of Canaan. Exactly what land is promised to Israel is a subject of importance from several points of view, and we must give thought to it.

First, let us notice the difference between the passages in Deuteronomy and Joshua. The first is "this" Lebanon. Although the words were spoken to Moses in approximately the same location, it is evident that to Joshua everything is more immediately before him both in time and space. I think we must understand that Joshua could see the Lebanon range. Next, the quotation is amplified by addition of the words "all the land of the Hittites". This perhaps stresses the meaning of the name "sons of terror", and contains an assurance to Joshua who long before refused to be dismayed by the giants reported by the spies. The opening words of v. 5, which in Deuteronomy are in the plural ("stand before *you*"), are in our chapter in the singular, and stand as the first of the personal assurances of Jehovah to Joshua as the new fighting leader.

The boundaries described in v. 4 identify the land which lay before Israel as the land promised to Abram (Genesis 15:18), and the promise is now confirmed. The "I do give" of v. 2 declares the present intention of Jehovah, to be fulfilled in this book of Scripture. The "I have given" of v. 3 refers to the promise already made to Moses. Thus we must understand the limits which now lie before us to be an amplification of Genesis 15. In these places the land is described in terms of the great natural barriers which enclose it. In Genesis 15 they are "from the River (Heb. *nahar*) unto the great river, the River Euphrates". The word *nahar* identifies a great river aligned in size and importance with the Euphrates, that is, the Nile. (It cannot mean the Brook of Egypt [Joshua 15:4, Heb. *nachal*] which means a valley torrent, so common in Palestine.) Three further barriers are now introduced: the "Wilderness", "this Lebanon", and the "great sea" — the Mediterranean. These five are all great natural barriers, and not lines of border villages as in other places.

The great stretch of Wilderness (desert) — Sinai, Jordan and Syria, all fringes of the immense Arabian Desert, stretching round the south and east of Canaan — is a prominent feature of the geography of the Near East. This feature determines the portion of the Euphrates intended. Is it the whole river from source to the Persian Gulf, or only a portion of this? It is that stretch of the great river which runs from its source in Armenia, across the north-eastern edge of Syria, until the desert interposes itself as the barrier nearest to Canaan.

The Lebanon ranges are manifestly a very striking natural barrier to the north of Canaan. The word Lebanon means "the white mountain". Several summits are in permanent snow. The familiar

photographs of one of the long, snow-covered summits, show a face presented to the east, and it is the south ends of Lebanon, Anti-lebano and Hermon which form the natural frontier.

These five natural frontiers enclose Palestine and include the whole of the coastal strip, the habitable parts of Syria, Jordan and a fragment of Egypt. We shall see in this Book details in which the conquest described came short of these borders. V. 4 gives assurance to Joshua that there would be nothing in the mind and intention of the God of Israel to cause Israel to fall short. The land in its totality, so promised and described, was never, even under David, included with stability in the land of Israel, but the promises remain, and what was impossible under the covenant of law will surely be accomplished under the covenant of promise. Likewise for the Christian, what cannot be apprehended in its fulness now, will surely be ours in its fulness according to the purpose of God and the love and the sacrifice of Christ.

vv. 5, 6 We now enter on the commands addressed to Joshua personally and in the singular. We can thus take them, like so many Psalms, directly to ourselves as principles of godliness above all dispensations, and unchanged throughout Scripture. V. 5 contains an assurance without which Joshua dare not take a single step — the assurance of the personal presence of Jehovah at his side “all the days”. See how this golden phrase is uttered by the Lord for all the circumstances of all His people. It applies to Jehovah’s care for His people in the wilderness: “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them *all the days of old*” (Isaiah 63:9). It is here repeated personally to Joshua: “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee *all the days* of thy life, . . . I will be with thee”. How often the familiar words of Psalm 23 have spoken to us: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me *all the days* of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever”. How the days differ! There is the good and sunny day, and there is the woefully evil day. There are days of strife and days of peace, but all are under the last words of the Saviour in Matthew’s Gospel, literally translated: “lo, I am with you *all the days* unto the end of the world”.

The last words of v. 5 are quoted in Hebrews 13:5 in a setting which assures us that the promises concerning godliness found in the Old Testament are directly available to the Christian. This Scripture appeals to me as a most precious example of the use of the “shield of faith” against the “fiery darts” of the Wicked One, and therefore appropriate to the fight for our Canaan. The injection into mind and heart of the thought that we are “on our own”, that God has forgotten us is indeed a fiery dart. Such a dart finds inflammable material within us when faith is feeble, and passionate feelings of distrust of God may flare up. It is for all such flames of passion that the shield of faith is provided, faith which lays hold of a word of God and claims its truth against all appearances. How many times when the pressures were most fierce must Joshua have spoken to his

heart: *Jehovah* hath said, "I will never leave thee, not forsake thee," so that *I* may boldly say, (another word of Scripture — Psalm 118:6) "I will not fear what man shall do unto me".

This promise of the unfailing presence and nearness of the Lord forms the basis for the stirring charge to "be strong and of good courage" which follows in v. 6. Strength and courage were vital, not only for himself, but also as Leader, so as to inspire the hosts who were to follow him and receive from him their inheritance in the land. So it is for us. Once the heart and spirit of the believer are awakened to the wealth of "hid treasure" open to him through his union with the ascended Christ, then the power needed for the struggle immediately deals with this need.

Who and what are against us? We shall experience their existence and drive the moment we set ourselves to possess and stand in our spiritual heritage. "The principalities . . . the powers . . . the world-rulers of this darkness . . . the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places". In the arena of this struggle, whatever may be the opposition visible in fellow-men of flesh and blood, we must see past them to the mysterious but real powers revealed to us in this verse (Ephesians 6:12, R.V.) as also in 2:2 "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience".

Who and what is to be our strength? Is it possible for us to be adequately empowered? Ephesians 6:10 is the counterpart of Joshua 1:6. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might". The occurrence several times of these three words in the same context in Ephesians is notable — (A.V.) strength, power, might. The engineering concepts and definitions of strength, work, power, energy, and the like, doubtless do not correspond to the range of words used in these Scriptures. But they do illustrate the many-sided completeness of the power resident in God and in His Christ. Read carefully the following passages in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and note the frequency of these words: 1:19,20; (the doctrine) 3:16,20; (the prayer) 6:10; (the warfare). Do they not demonstrate all the fulness that lies behind the provision for the warfare in heavenly places: "Be strong and of a good courage"?

vv. 7-9 In these verses the words to be underlined are "only" (v. 7) and "then" (v. 8). The previous verses have emphasised the "I" of all *Jehovah's* doing: "I do give"; "I have given": "I will be with thee": "I will not forsake thee"; "I swear unto" your fathers. The "only" thus signifies, "Since I, *Jehovah* have charged myself with the burden of *all* that is needed to ensure prosperity and good success, *you* have only two things to consider, courage and obedience. And the "then" signifies, "Granted that you on your part grasp these two opportunities, *then* you are guaranteed that "thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success".

Strategy and tactics, ambushes, night marches, stratagems and surprise attacks are all to be found in the story. These directions are not to say that these means and many other marks of generalship are not required; but they do say that, with *Jehovah* himself by your side, it is all in the book.

Strength and courage have been the subjects of v. 6, but obedience is now insistently required. Here on this page of Scripture there stands before us the very first man, and the very first people who possessed the written word of God. The "strength and courage", the energy and the decisive action are required in the first place "to observe to do" according to that word. Here is the point at which the opposition of spiritual powers to your stand in Canaan begins. If you fail here, it is unlikely that later lessons will bear their fruit. In the special sense of our study of the Book of Joshua, to observe the action pressed with such energy and concentration is not only to enjoy an expository exercise, but to expose ourselves to stimulus to such action in the spiritual arena. "Turn not from it — it shall not depart out of thy mouth — meditate therein day and night". Joshua, and all who learn this lesson will be like the righteous man of Psalm 1 who meditates in the law of the Lord day and night, and likewise enjoys prosperity.

Meditation is a means of grace most greatly to be esteemed. Whatever may be the method adopted, meditation essentially is a means of prolonging the exposure of mind and affections to the beneficent action of the Word. It means, not being satisfied with the first exposure, when the Word is heard or read, but returning to the portion which has come before us, and so giving the Word itself time to produce the effect upon us for which it was "sent forth". Read v. 8 again. Do you not feel in your heart its grip and drive? What apart from God's Word could reach out like this across the centuries and the translations, and fit us men and women as the key fits the lock?

vv. 10-18 The people are instructed to make preparations for the Jordan crossing, and this applies also to the two tribes and a half of which we read in Numbers 31. For the moment all appears to be in order with them, for the land they chose was within the land of promise. But it was chosen by themselves and not by God and is for this reason reminiscent of Lot and the choice he made. At best they seem to represent those who are satisfied with peripheral blessings, rather than that which is really Canaan.

TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

ALLAN RETALLICK

1 Samuel 15

King Saul was a highly favoured person. We read that he was a choice young man, comely, and taller than any of the people. He was also chosen by God to be the first king over the nation of Israel, when it tired of Samuel's leadership and wanted to have a king "like all the nations". In 1 Samuel 9 we read of the way in which he was led, in the course of his search for his father's asses, to the neighbourhood of Samuel's house, where he was anointed by the aged prophet. In succeeding chapters we read of his modesty and courage, but chapter 13 shows another characteristic, not altogether unknown, perhaps, in

our own experience — impatience. Samuel had promised to come to Gilgal to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices, and to instruct him in his leadership of God's people. Saul had by this time mustered an army and his son Jonathan had already made an assault on a Philistine outpost. When Saul and his little army gathered at the appointed place, they were dismayed to see a tremendous army of Philistines facing them, "as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude". No wonder they were distressed, and hid themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, high places and pits. They had not learnt the lesson of earlier victories — "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14).

When the seventh day arrived, and there was no sign of Samuel, Saul took it upon himself to offer up a burnt offering, intending to carry on with peace offerings as well. Before he had got so far, however, the "man of God" came, whereupon Saul went out to meet him, only to be challenged by the question asked almost at the beginning of human history: "What hast thou done?" Saul's ready explanation may appear quite reasonable. Do we not often reason in the same fashion when faced with this same question? Saul explains: "Because I saw . . . I said . . . I forced myself and offered". He saw the opportunity slipping from his grasp for the lack of firm leadership and quick decisions, not realising that the eternal God was able to give the victory in His own time, so long as His people were obedient to Him. Saul even gave a pious tint to his impatience: "I said . . . I have not made supplication to the Lord". It is so easy to convince ourselves that our wilful impatience is holy zeal. Alas, it may even have the character of Jehu's "Zeal for the Lord".

Samuel recognised this fleshly energy for what it was: "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God." So serious was this folly that he continued: "But now thy kingdom will not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart". At the very outset of his reign he had forfeited his right to the throne — because he did not keep the commandment of the Lord.

In the next chapter we read how Saul, by a foolish decree, nearly turned Jonathan's victory into a defeat, and was scarcely restrained from putting him to death. "My father hath troubled the land", says Jonathan. We notice that Saul was ready to reprove the people, who, in their desperation, had fallen upon the spoil and were eating meat with the blood, in disobedience to God's law. We can all recognise in others the faults that we excuse in ourselves.

In chapter 15 we read of Saul's final test. First Samuel reminds him: "The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over His people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou to the voice of the words of the Lord". Not only did Samuel pass on the Divine instructions, but he also explained *why* he was to destroy Amalek utterly. God remembered Amalek's treatment of His people, as He has taken note of the treatment of His people ever since. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8).

Saul showed consideration for the Kenites, who dwelt among the Amalekites, warning them to get out before the judgment fell, since

they had shown kindness to Israel when they came up out of Egypt. Then he proceeded to smite the Amalekites. There was no question of total destruction, since we read of Amalekites later in the history of David, and the king, Agag, Saul himself brought back alive, while we read that "Saul and the people" spared the best of the cattle, and all that was of value among the spoil. Only that which was worthless they destroyed. We sometimes speak of "radical reform", that is, dealing with the very root of the matter, but it is another thing to carry this out in our lives. We each have our own standards to determine what is worthless. The Scripture says: "Make *no* provision for the flesh."

Saul imagined, no doubt, that he had been obedient. He said, when he returned to Samuel: "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." God expressed it otherwise in speaking to Samuel: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul as king: for he . . . hath not performed my commandments." Samuel too, was moved to ask: "What meaneth then this bleating of sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

Adam, challenged about his sin, blamed "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me". Eve, in her turn, blamed the serpent. We are inclined to blame our upbringing, our environment, our leaders. God holds us personally responsible to obey His word. "Thou art the man!" was the prophet's word to David. Saul again tried to impute religious motives to his disobedience. "The people spared the best to sacrifice to the Lord." Patiently, faithfully, Samuel reminded Saul of the grace that had taken him up when he was of no account, and raised him to the exalted place that was his. Sadly, even David had to be reminded of this unmerited favour of God when reproached for his grievous sin (2 Samuel 12:7-12). The Ephesians, too, were bidden to remember (Ephesians 2:11; Revelation 2:5). By grace they (and we) were saved.

How obstinately Saul persisted in saying: "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord . . . but the people took of the spoil." He admitted that these things should have been utterly destroyed, but they kept them "to sacrifice to the Lord thy God". How often we are told that, as long as we are sincere, it does not matter if we neglect the teaching of the apostles. After all, we know that our sins are forgiven through the finished work of Christ. That is the most important matter. God cannot expect us, we are told, to keep all the difficult injunctions as to separation from evil, submission to authority, dependence on the leading of the Holy Spirit in our service, and so on.

The words spoken by Samuel cut right through our mock piety. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Partial obedience is disobedience!

Someone has put it this way. If I am convicted for driving through a red light, I cannot plead that I had already stopped at every other red light on my journey. I drove through a red light, and so transgressed the law. James tells us "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Samuel continued: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry". How different are God's thoughts from ours! We frown on superstition and idolatry, but do we judge the rebellion and stubbornness (self-will) in ourselves?

Not fashioning a golden calf at Sinai, and leading the people in idolatrous worship, kept Aaron from the promised land, but his rebellion, with Moses, at the waters of Meribah (Numbers 20:24). The rock spoke of Christ, *who was to die once for all*. When Moses, instead of speaking to the rock, struck it twice more, he spoilt all the sacred imagery of the Old Testament. A husband who does not love his wife, a wife who is not subject to her husband, a woman teaching in the Church — these undermine divine principles, as the New Testament teaches. We need those who, like Samuel, have the courage to hew our Agags in pieces before the Lord.

Saul did not learn his lesson. Although he said: "I have sinned", he could not forbear to follow it with "Honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people". Is this quite unknown to us? Eli had honoured his sons above his God, and to him came the word: "Them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," wrote Paul to the Corinthians (14:37). *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.*

LIFTING UP THE EYES ————— R. A. CREETH

Several times in the Old Testament we read of people lifting up the eyes, and it is instructive to consider some of these occurrences. For instance, in Psalm 121 the question is asked, "*I lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: whence shall my help come?*" (New Trans.). And at once the psalmist supplies the answer: "My help cometh from Jehovah, who made the heavens and the earth." The mountains (whether taken literally or as a metaphor of human grandeur and power) had for long been the trust of Israel, for in their pride they had leaned upon the creature rather than the Creator. But the time came when they acknowledged their sinful departure from Jehovah, and in returning to Him they said, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art Jehovah, our God. Truly in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and the multitude of mountains; truly in Jehovah our God is the salvation of Israel" (Jeremiah 3:23).

Israel did not turn to God in vain, for He at once assured them of His faithful and continual care of His failing people, as Psalm 121 goes on to express so beautifully. Alas, that Israel's failure is so often ours! Are we not prone to turn to natural things and walk by the sight of our eyes rather than rely upon the One who is seen only by faith, the Eternal and All-sufficient One?

Let us look also at Psalm 123. "*Unto Thee Do I lift up mine eyes,*

O Thou that dwellest in the heavens.” And how beautiful is the following verse! “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are directed to Jehovah our God.” As humble servants of our risen and glorified Master, let us be lifting up our eyes to Him with an earnest desire to please Him and to do his will. Let us seek to win His commendation: “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Proverbs 8:34).

In Genesis 13 we are told of two men who lifted up their eyes. The first is Lot who “*lifted up his eyes*, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere . . .” Lot seems to have accompanied his uncle Abram into Canaan without real exercise of soul; he acted on Abram’s faith, not his own. How often we make the same mistake! Our eye is upon one we consider spiritual rather than upon the Lord Himself.

Abram felt it keenly when contention broke out between his herdsmen and Lot’s, with the Canaanite and Perizzite looking on. So he said to Lot, “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee. . . . Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left”. Abram thus acted like a true man of faith. Having God as His portion, he could let earthly things go by, and Lot is given the choice of the whole land. And how does Lot respond to this test of his faith? *Lot lifted up his eyes* and saw the well-watered plain of Jordan, so beautiful and attractive naturally, and so suitable for his herds of cattle, and he chose to move in that direction — a downward course, for the word “Jordan” means “descending”. To the outward eye so attractive, it flows steadily down to the sea of judgment, the Dead Sea, from which there is no escape.

Notice carefully how Lot drifts towards Sodom. He first “pitched his tent *towards* Sodom”. He did not go into the city all at once, but the desire for it was in his heart. While Abram, in the realisation and enjoyment of his heavenly portion (Hebrews 11:10), was content to dwell in the land of Canaan, Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom (Genesis 13:12). We find him gravitating towards the wicked city, and eventually dwelling there (chapter 14:12) — the very place which was soon to be destroyed by the judgment of God. And not only did he dwell in Sodom, but he obtained a position of honour there, “sitting in the gate” (19:1).

How solemn and heart-searching is this history of Lot! From the narrative we would not know that he was a converted soul, but Peter tells us that he was a just man vexing his righteous soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds of a wicked people (2 Peter 2:6-8). A just man, in the wrong place, with an unsatisfied heart, grasping after the things of the world, yet finding nothing really to satisfy him! How we need to be reminded again and again that we do not belong to this world! Our Lord said this twice in John 17: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (verses 14, 16). The believer is *in* the world, but not *of* it. We are strangers and pilgrims here. Remember

that the beginning of Lot's failure was the lifting up of his eyes and setting them upon that which typified the world.

Now let us look at Abram. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, *Lift up now thine eyes*, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (verses 14-15). He had been called by the God of glory (Acts 7:2-4), his tent marked him out as a stranger and pilgrim, and his altar witnessed to his intercourse with God as a worshipper. Now God assured him that a vast inheritance was his, to be possessed in due time. Let us remind ourselves that as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we have an infinitely higher portion, for we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Do we realise the extent of our heavenly blessing, and are we practically enjoying it?

In Ephesians 3 the apostle prays to "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, 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". We are thus brought to the centre of the counsels of God, and can look out on that vast panorama of glory in which we shall have our part, for we shall be associated with Christ in His eternal glory. But there is something more; the apostle adds, "and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge". The love of Christ in its fulness is beyond our comprehension, but how blessed that we do know that love!

God said to Abram, "Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee". It is as much as to say, "Abram, put your foot down on the land wherever you are; it is all yours". Similarly, when God brought the children of Israel into the land of Canaan they had to make it their own by taking actual possession of it (Joshua 1:3). So have we to lay hold of our heavenly portion, and make it our own, not indeed in our own strength, but by being strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10).

In Genesis 18 we find that the one who manifested an obedient and godly walk enjoyed intimate communion with his God. "The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and *he lift up his eyes* and looked, and lo, three men stood by him." Abraham seemed to have instinctively recognised one of these as a divine Visitor, who graciously accepted refreshment at his hand. Later He communicated His purpose concerning Sodom, and Abraham interceded for the wicked city. Thus, as C.H.M. points out beautifully, we find Abraham in the enjoyment of three special privileges; namely, providing refreshment *for* the Lord, enjoying full communion *with* the Lord, and interceding for others *before* the Lord.

Again in chapter 22 when Abraham was called upon to offer up his loved son as a burnt offering, and Isaac was bound and placed upon

the altar, it is recorded that *Abraham lifted up his eyes*, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (verse 13). A striking and beautiful type this of the sacrifice of Christ, for though Isaac was spared the ram became a substitute for him, and we are reminded of Romans 8:32: "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

It is interesting to notice that it is recorded of both Isaac and Rebekah that they "lifted up their eyes". Abraham had sent his servant to seek a wife for his son Isaac, and when the servant, accompanied by Rebekah, is returning to his master's house, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and *he lifted up his eyes*, and saw, and behold the camels were coming" (Genesis 24:63). Isaac was patiently waiting the fulfilment of his father's purpose that the son should have a bride on whom to bestow his affection, and as he lifted up his eyes he saw the first signs of this purpose being accomplished. And what of the bride herself? "*Rebekah lifted up her eyes*, and when she saw Isaac she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself". This is very beautiful. Rebekah does not want anyone else to see her. As soon as she saw Isaac she covered herself; she was now to be exclusively for him. Such should be the attitude of the bride of Christ: let us be entirely for Him, the soon-coming Bridegroom, the One who loved the church and gave Himself for it, and who is soon to present it to Himself, a church all glorious, not having spot, nor wrinkle, or any such thing (Ephesians 5:25).

Finally, let us look at Joshua. The children of Israel were about to march against Jericho, and "it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that *he lifted up his eyes* and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Joshua 5:13-15).

Are we not reminded that we too have a Captain, a Leader of salvation, who is engaged in bringing many sons to glory? (Hebrews 2:10). This perfect Captain of salvation has identified Himself in wondrous grace with His people: "for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren". He has undertaken to bring them to glory, and they are to be there in the eternal relationship of sons in all the nearness and affection of the Father's presence.

May these scriptures encourage us to lift up our eyes and be occupied more and more with the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, to look for Him with deep bridal affection as Rebekah looked for the bridegroom of her heart, and to appreciate more and more His unlimited resources as Captain of salvation. May we, like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration *lift up our eyes* and see no man save Jesus only (Matthew 17:8).

FROM THE EDITORS' NOTEBOOK

MEETINGS, MARRIAGES AND MURDERS

Marriage today is commonly treated as a contract terminable by either side at a moment's notice. This attitude may be argued to have the virtue of keeping both partners constantly on their toes, but I doubt if things really work out this way. Such marriages are built upon anxiety, even suspicion, because they lack the fundamental security of "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer . . ."

Many Christians' attitudes to their "meeting" is just like this. As long as it has the activities they approve of, displays qualities that attract them, they will be there. But if it does not, they are off, to a "fellowship" or congregation that suits them better. Christianity today is the Christianity of the supermarket, where people shop around, sample here and there, before they settle for that variety on offer that best pleases *them*. None of us can wholly escape this of course. But is this what Pentecost was for?

Other people, however, have an attitude to the meeting like the attitude to marriage recently expressed by an old Welshman when asked whether in his long married life he had ever contemplated divorce.

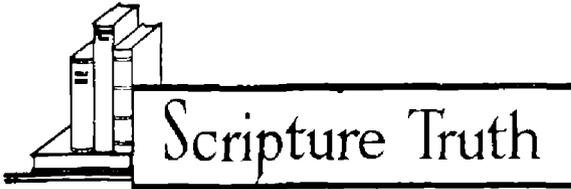
"Divorce?" he replied, "Never! Murder — a thousand times, but divorce — never!"

Such people would scarcely dream of "leaving the meeting", but will happily spend years quietly murdering it by incessant, life-destroying criticism.

Good marriages are built upon the conviction that they are made "until death do us part — or the Lord come", and on the further conviction that they do not flourish of themselves, as did the Garden of Eden, but, as everything tends to decay in this fallen world, constant effort has to be put into making them work.

Good "meeting relations" likewise are made by people who are there not as a matter of transient taste, convenience, or personal preference, but because it is the *right* place to be and it would be *wrong* to be elsewhere. They have, however, the added conviction that as all things tend to disorder, good meeting relations will require *endless* labour to make them work, and grow. Criticism will be voiced only after much exercise before the Lord. Only such "meetings" provide the restful security and the "consideration one of another" in which love, and the Gospel testimony to the Saviour can flourish.

Of course there are circumstances where the sentiments expressed above (i.e. about attitudes to the "meeting") do not fit. Where that is so, it is a tragedy, and nothing less, and should be regarded as such. — T.B.



MARCH, 1981

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

I AM

COLIN CURRY

“Before Abraham was, I am” John 8:58.

“I will come again . . . that where I am, there ye may be also”
John 14:3.

The title of our article is a Name of God, and focuses our attention on an order of life and being that is far above unaided human appreciation. Yet the Scriptures quoted are words of the Lord Jesus, found as a Man here on earth, speaking of His Deity and of His own central place in that timeless and uncreated realm. More than this, He assures “His own” of their ultimate welcome into that realm where He is supreme and all-glorious.

In several other statements of the Lord Jesus the words, “I am”, are coupled with further words, forming rather longer statements. “I am the bread of life” is an example. Here the Lord Jesus draws attention to one feature only of all that He provides for those who know and draw upon Him. In later articles we may consider some of these great assertions of His. The simple words, “I am”, and “where I am”, as used by Him, are deeply profound words in themselves, however. The present paper concentrates on these.

As used by our Lord, the claim, “I am”, is a high and unique one. It is no less than an assertion of His deity. It expresses His eternal self-existence. Of course, though we do not normally pause to make so obvious a statement, in a certain way we too can use the same words about ourselves. But such a statement, made by ourselves, has a much more restricted meaning. In saying “I am” we state the fact of our existence. Our existence is real, we have *being* on the created, dependent level; and this in itself is an astonishing fact if we reflect on it. But the contrast between *our* kind of usage of these words and *His* use of them needs to be picked out. The sharp distinction between *derived* being and His essential timeless being is important to make. We do this in the first two sections. This will highlight the tremendous truth implied in these words as our Lord used them. Next, guided by His expression “where I am”, we consider that grand eternal realm, the atmosphere and the home-environment to which *He* belongs, where He is the Centre, the Object, and the Key-Figure. Finally, we notice briefly the remarkable truth that we believers belong there too; we belong to the place where *He is*, and are to be altogether there with Him quite soon.

The things that *are*

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things that are seen were made of things which do not appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

It is a commonplace matter that persons like ourselves have *being*. Yet the fact that anything at all *exists* has its own major significance. Efforts to “explain” physical reality apart from the Bible have ranged from quite fanciful ideas long since abandoned, to the more disciplined and reasonable-sounding notions currently in vogue. The Biblical answer to this question stands apart from all the rest, however. It lies in the realm of revelation from God. The others are the product of human searchings and speculation. Moreover, the Biblical answer is the only real answer. Other explanations are always tentative (including the up-to-date ones). They depend on processes of *theorising*, and sooner or later they lack facts to support them. An “answer” which ultimately relies on pure speculation hardly deserves that status. “Science has all the answers” is a common thought with many people, but the proper scientific spirit is less confident, and knows its limitations. Science (properly so called) *can* account for many things; it can *describe* processes in the physical realm and in some measure it can *understand* the dynamics of what goes on in given situations. But origins, discontinuities, the boundaries between non-existence and existence, are entirely outside its province. The sudden emergence, from nothing at all, of an all-comprehensive embryo of the universe (matter, or energy, in some unimaginably potent form) is no truly scientific explanation. It is in fact an utterly naïve idea. The belief that everything that *is* consists of a complete “going concern” all on its own, without some Ground of Being behind it, is a naïve faith indeed. As an answer it begs all the questions. The Biblical understanding of these fundamental questions also comes by faith, but faith of this kind has much to support it. Resting on God, the God of the Bible, the God of revelation, it is indeed a well-grounded faith.

According to the Bible, things as they *are* provide the first stage of God’s witness to Himself. Their very existence speaks of Him. In them His Voice is heard, and His glory is declared. Persons and things exist, and are a standing testimony to a Fount of life and being outside of themselves. All other supposed understanding in this area falls short of real understanding. It comes close to pure credulity, it is a cover for ignorance, it is a preference for darkness. These are strong statements, but they indicate what the Bible teaches. The very fact that I can say “I am” rebukes my folly if I ignore God. Doing so, I have turned away from something which faces me firmly and unequivocally. Of course the voice of God in creation is greatly reinforced by further disclosures from Himself. The voice of Scripture is the Word of the living God; it is alive with His authority and vitality. Human awareness of moral standards (and of shortcomings in the light of those standards) indicates strongly that there is a world of eternal values and judgments consonant with the character of God. It also provides special evidence that man is a distinct part of God’s handywork. All these voices to men supplement the testimony of creation to God. Above all else,

there is "the true Light, which (having come into the world) shines for every man" (John 1:9). The most conclusive of all witnesses to God has shone in Christ, and continues to shine. Nothing can add to that! How comprehensive is the whole story of God's revelation of Himself to men!

To sum up the immediate point of the present section, however, persons and things have *contingent existence*, not existence in their own right. Our very being is a pointer to the Living God "in Whom we live and move and have our being".

The God that is

"He that cometh to God must believe that He *is*, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

It is surely apposite that the words "Before Abraham was, I am", spoken by the Lord Jesus, should be prefaced by those great introductory words "Verily, verily". It is the climax of the chapter in which it falls. Indeed, with its supreme claim to Deity it is among the most simple and sublime words that He said. It could be rendered "Before Abraham *came into being*, I am". Abraham came into being; but Jesus is God, and God *is*. Of course the Lord Jesus might have said: Before Abraham was, I *was*. It would have expressed part of the truth; it would have spoken of His precedence over Abraham in time. But His word is "I *am*". A mode of being which had a distinct beginning (Abraham's) is contrasted with one which is eternal (His own). The Source and Giver of all life is contrasted with one who received life (and later died). There is continuity, unchangeableness, and underived Life and Being, in this word I AM.

These words were by no means spoken in a self-assertive, provocative way. That never was the manner of our Lord. As the context shows, He did not seek to honour Himself. Always His words and actions were in line with the Father's will. But, faced with animosity and heated argument from proud, deluded, orthodox Jews, fiercely aware of their privileged background, He speaks the full truth, about them and about Himself; and He does it with calm and supreme dignity. This witnessing to the truth, too, was a necessary part of obedience to His Father. What a marvellous view this chapter gives of a sinless devoted Man Who could also in very truth use and claim the ineffable Name "I am".

These words of our Lord reflect the great revelation of the divine Name to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). His hearers almost certainly must have seen it so. The Greek follows the O.T. Greek translation of the Hebrew name in Exodus 3. "I am" is said in an emphatic form not usual in ordinary speech; it is a statement in the style of Deity. He had used it earlier (verses 24, 28) but now He makes its full content absolutely clear. Spoken to Moses, that Name involved the absolute existence and the eternal consistency of the One it described. Furthermore, it spoke of God in action, living and powerful, doing irresistibly what He *would* do, revealing Himself in time and in history. Here was the great Initiator of saving acts on behalf of those in bondage, exposing and shattering their enemies,

over-riding all gainsaying of His will, completing as well as beginning all His intentions for His people. These great features were no less present in the Person of Jesus the Son of God, and are embodied in Him in a way that has a permanent and ageless stamp upon it.

There are echoes of many other Old Testament pronouncements of God about Himself in these words of the Lord Jesus. "I am God, and there is none else"; "I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am He"; "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me" (Isaiah 45:22, 41:4; Deuteronomy 32:39). A good list of such passages, though by no means an exhaustive one, appears in the translation by J. N. Darby as a footnote to the last-quoted verse. These are grand statements, in the style and with the authority of Deity indeed, and our Lord's statement here is entirely in line with them.

The continuous nature of the present tense in all these expressions must be understood in the strictest sense. He continually IS. From eternity to eternity He *is* God. Apart from our present text, a number of New Testament verses use a similar "timeless present" construction in statements about our Lord. We refer to two further striking examples, one from Paul and another from John. These certainly convey important truth to us. Paul, in Romans 9, speaks of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh; Israelites, who had enjoyed so many favours from God, and who had been given the crowning distinction of all, that from amongst them "as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who *is* over all God, blessed for ever" (verse 5). Here is another timeless expression, telling us what He *is*. Christ sprang, on the human side of His being, from Israel; He came into holy manhood. Yet always He *is* and *abides* nothing less than the Supreme God. Paul may well burst into praise at the thought, and it calls for our response too.

John 1:18 is also a tremendous affirmation about our Lord. It is the summing-up of the Prologue to the Gospel. "No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which *is* in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him". The construction (present participle) is the same as in the last-cited verse. He abides in the bosom of the Father in an eternal, timeless way, without beginning and without ending. The unique Son of the Father, ever in that special place of closest intimacy, of complete union and communion with the Father, is fully able to reveal Him to men. No man has ever seen God, but, in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father". Of course, we are not speaking of a mere intellectual view of God as Father, but of an open door (through Him) into that realm of Life and Love which is the homeland of the Father and the Son.

His Home, and ours!

"They came and saw *where he dwelt*, and abode with him that day" (John 1:39).

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me *where I am*; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

The apostle John's writings have a wealth of teaching on the great theme of eternal life. Our Lord speaks about eternal life as knowledge of the Father (the only true God) and of Jesus Christ, the Sent One (the Son, the Revealer of God) (John 17:3). This is not knowledge only, it is *life*. It is life of a supreme quality, belonging to the eternal realm. That life has been *manifested* (seen, heard, and handled) here on earth. The record of it has been passed on, the power and availability of it remains; fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, is as real a possibility today as it was to the early witnesses (1 John 1:1-4). Fullness of joy is known in this great experience. This life is entered by being arrested and quickened by the word of Christ. On hearing His word, and believing on Him that sent Him, one passes beyond condemnation; one passes from death unto life. Eternal life is certainly the possession of the believer, received as a gift. But it is a *life* too; a living experience of the highest kind.

It is clear that the key to access into these special Christian experiences is the Person and Work of Christ. The Father was seen in Him, His beloved Son, in all His ways on earth; in His words and in His works. But the crowning act of all was the laying down of His life, in obedience and in total concert with His Father's will. The unearthly love that belongs to the heavenly realm showed itself in its inexpressible quality there. Out of that death, our life with Him springs. On that basis, on the other side of His death, we have a fadeless life that lives in those precincts where He is supreme, a life that inhabits those climes where divine love is its environment and home. This open door into the heavenly realm of life and love only exists through the coming of the Son, sent by the Father, finishing the great work which was given Him to do. But the work of the Holy Spirit must also be mentioned. Our entry into the appreciation of this rich life which is ours is of *His* enabling. Indwelling the believer as He does today, pointing him always to the Lord Jesus, His function in substantiating these things in our own experience is a vital one. Our Lord had much to say about the importance of the Holy Spirit's work in the experience of the disciples, who was to be in them and amongst them, soon after He had ascended (see especially John 14-16).

But let us conclude on the note that the eternal scene is primarily the place where He *is*. He is at the heart and at the focus of everything there. The Father's love and the Father's pleasure rest on Him. In that great realm of love and joy Christ is all and in all, and His peerless beauty and glory outshine all else. We are not foreigners to this area of things today: the sense of our acceptance "in the beloved", of enjoyment of the Father's love, and the awareness of the supreme glory and worth of "the Son of His love"; these are real experiences today. But His word is a firm one indeed that His loved ones (at His coming) will go there in the complete sense, taken there personally, to be with Him where He *is*. Our destiny there is sure. There is much indeed that we shall share with Him, in that home of life and love. But, perhaps the highest bliss of all will be the unclouded vision, occupied with Himself alone, beholding His ineffable glory who was loved, as the Father's only Son, before the foundation of the world.

SHADOWS OF THE SAVIOUR—————**GORDON KELL****4. DAVID AND GOLIATH**

There are few Bible stories so universally well known as “David and Goliath”. The young Hebrew shepherd boy’s destruction of an apparently invincible giant has affected young and old alike. Unfortunately the story’s popular appeal has perhaps led many of us to view it only as a vehicle to capture the imagination of an audience. Consequently the surface of 1 Samuel 17 is only skimmed, whilst its true standing in Scripture, as a powerful portrayal of Christ’s *victory* at the cross, is generally lost sight of. Let us therefore consider, in this the last of our four “Shadows”, the aspects of this great event which point strikingly to the time when Christ would enter the “valley of death”, defeat Satan and return victorious.

The great enemy

The Scriptures go to some length to describe Goliath, the enemy of Israel. Attention is drawn to his size, armour, plan, defiance, success, and inevitable defeat. By looking carefully at these points we see that Goliath reflects with remarkable accuracy the great enemy of God and mankind — Satan. His physique and title of “champion” indicate enormous strength and importance, whilst his armour, outlined in great detail, gives the impression of invulnerability. He was a remarkable man, yet, like Satan, he used his strength and power to oppose God in an attempt to steal a place of admiration.

In his determination to secure this position the devil employs two methods. Firstly, subtlety — as seen in the garden of Eden, and secondly, as shown in this story, brute force. It is very important that we should be aware of his use of these things to undermine the church of God. We may not feel the brute force of open persecution but we are certainly in danger of the subtleties of materialism and spiritual pride. In contrast to these manifestations of Satan’s character God sent Jesus Christ, “full of grace and truth”.

Although Goliath’s plan centred upon his self assurance and led to an outright defiance of God’s people, and therefore God Himself, it was, in part, successful. It terrified Israel (v. 14). The extent of that fear was emphasised by the fact that at the head of that great nation, were three outstanding warriors who symbolised man at his best, yet powerless against his greatest enemy. Saul — man at his most attractive, Jonathan — man at his most courageous, and Abner — man at his most knowledgeable — were all there.

It is into this situation of fear and powerlessness that God introduces David.

The Great Shepherd

If ever there was a great contrast between two men, it was between David and Goliath. David arrived unashamed as a shepherd, an occupation his ancestors were despised for and the reason for the mockery of his brethren. They placed little value upon his appearance

in the camp. In the same way Jesus experienced attacks by those who envied Him, even amongst his own family, yet these only served to highlight His dignity and determination to glorify God. The Spirit of God also brings to light unseen aspects of David's life which further direct our attention to Christ. It is twice mentioned that David left something in the hands of a keeper (v. 20, v. 22) and later his encounters with a lion and a bear are recorded (v. 36). These things, which proved David's carefulness and courage, were unseen by the majority but noticed by God. In a far more wonderful way Christ's hidden life was traced in all its perfection by the Father.

David's witness in the camp, amongst his people, displays exuberance, energy and fearlessness which neither brethren, king or giant could extinguish. His words, "Is there not a cause?" seem to shout from the page. And in these ways the young shepherd presents in a unique and refreshing way Christ's holy, burning devotion to God and the salvation of mankind. He represents Christ, the good shepherd ready to lay down his life for the sheep; the Christ of Hebrews 2 who would "through death 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".

The great victory

It is not difficult to imagine the scene as David moved down the valley to meet Goliath (one wonders if the experience caused him to write verse 4 of Psalm 23, or, if he had already written it, to remember its sentiment).

He had left Saul's armour behind and gone out in weakness, laying aside all outward symbols of strength, power and reputation (see Philippians 2:6-8). Instead of the king's armour he took his staff, representing the shepherd's care and love, and he chose five smooth stones. Not only did David go into the "valley of death" but all his possessions, clothes, staff, sling, bag and stones were likewise marked by death. The greatness of Christ's victory at the cross is heightened by the fact that it was won upon the enemy's territory, under his conditions, and unaided.

This is the most important aspect of the story; a portrayal of the *character* of Christ's victory. Goliath was not only defeated, but he was defeated when he possessed every advantage, by a conqueror who was in a position of disadvantage. In this way the incident foreshadows the tremendous victory of Christ at Calvary. It is the victim becoming the victor; by dying He defeats death; by suffering He saves; by being cursed He blesses.

As David approaches Goliath the giant's disdain for his opponent is made clear. God's men have always experienced this onslaught — Satan's attempt to belittle God's representative. This was never more so than at the cross when the Son of God was ridiculed as He offered Himself "a ransom for all". It is food for our souls and encouragement to our hearts to view the Lord's character through it all; see 1 Peter 2:21-25. David's response typifies something we little think of in the heart of Christ — holy energy. Confronted by the

mocking Goliath he says "I am come to thee in the Name of the Lord of Hosts . . . whom thou has defied. This day I will smite thee . . . and David hasted and ran. . . ." (verses 45-49). It is wonderful to know that Christ died for us; here the Spirit of God shows us that He also crushed Satan and in the place where the world's shame and sin was displayed glorified God. The stone which hit Goliath's head and killed him cannot fail to remind us of God's prophecy to Eve concerning the Messiah (Genesis 3:15) and to this Scripture is added the exulting note — "there was no sword in the hand of David". Looking at the cross we see the power of God displayed through weakness; in Revelation 5 we see glory centred in a freshly slain lamb — no sword, but what eternal victory!

It has been said that David chose five stones, not because of His inaccuracy, but to represent the five giants from Gath. Goliath died at David's hand, and the other four at the hands of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 21:22; cp. 1 Chronicles 20:5-8). It is sufficient to say that the victory is the Saviour's, but His people share in His triumphs.

As we conclude this series of "Old Testament Shadows", we seem to hear the question, "What practical value has typical teaching for our lives?" All that is of "practical value for God" in our lives is only the response to His love for us, manifested in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. The response is in proportion to our appreciation of the greatness of that love, that Gift. When we realise that the gift of His Son meant so much to God, that long before it happened He filled the pages of the Old Testament with "shadows" of it "for our learning", and when we perceive the sharpened outline of His love that these "shadows" present to our hearts, do we not have a better basis than we had before to serve the God who "so loved . . ."?

GOD GLORIFIED IN THE PERFECT MAN — R. A. CREETH

Seven times in the Gospel of Luke the expression "glorified God" or "glorifying God" occurs, and always in connection with the Lord Jesus. And when we consider that the great object of Luke's Gospel is to set forth the perfect humanity of the Son of God, the seven incidents in which these words occur illustrate the blessed fact that God was glorified in the perfect Man here on earth. Let us consider these incidents in the order of their occurrence.

God was glorified at His birth

In Luke 2:20 we read, "The shepherds returned, *glorifying and praising God* for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." They had been the first to receive a wonderful message from an angel of the Lord, and they had seen the glory of the Lord shining round about them. The angelic message was, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord". Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men."

How delightful to contemplate the angels bursting into praise to celebrate the great purposes of God! Firstly, glory to God in the highest, in the very dwelling-place of God. Secondly, on earth peace, where there was nothing but enmity and rebellion against God. Thirdly, God's complacency was centred in men now that His Son had become a man.

How beautiful too to witness the implicit and unquestioning faith of these humble shepherds, as they said as soon as the angels had departed from them, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And having found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger, they proclaimed to those around what they had heard and seen. Then they went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God. Thus was God glorified at the incarnation of His Son.

The forgiveness of sins brings glory to God

The second occurrence of our phrase is in chapter 5:25-26. When the Lord saw the faith of those who brought the paralysed man to Him, He said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee". Thus the Lord deals with the root of the matter first. In order to meet the powerlessness of a sinner he must be forgiven. If I am to have power to walk before God and serve Him, I must have the assurance that my sins are forgiven. In order to demonstrate that as Son of man He had power upon earth to forgive sins, He instructed the palsied man to take up his couch and go into his house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, *glorifying God*. The people were all amazed, and *they glorified God*, and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today". Thus was God glorified in meeting man's initial need, in the imparting of the forgiveness of sins.

God glorified in the raising of the dead

In chapter 7:11-17 we have the account of the raising of the widow's son at the gate of the city of Nain. It is beautiful to see the Lord's compassion going out to the widowed mother before exercising His power in raising the young man to life. He that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother, with the result that there came a fear on all: and *they glorified God*, saying, "A great prophet is risen up among us", and "God has visited His people". God had come down in the Person of His Son, and was demonstrating His power to bring life out of the midst of death. How blessed that today when the spiritually dead hear the quickening voice of the Son of God, they that hear shall live (John 5:25).

God glorified in lifting up the fallen

In chapter 13:11-17 the Lord heals a woman who had been bowed down with an infirmity for eighteen years, and was wholly unable to lift up her head. When Jesus saw her He called to her, and said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity". Then He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and *glorified God*.

The ruler of the synagogue was indignant because the healing took place on the sabbath day, but our Lord answered him, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" Satan's power was in evidence on earth, but the setting free of one of his captives by the mighty Deliverer brought glory to God. The Lord's adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

God glorified in the cleansing of the leper

In chapter 17:11-19 it is recorded that our Lord was passing through Samaria and Galilee when ten leprous men, standing afar off, cried out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us". The Lord's reply was, "Go, show yourselves to the priests". Thus He exercised their faith and upheld the requirement of the law. It was as they were going that they were cleansed, and one of them when he saw that he was healed turned back, and with a loud voice *glorified God*, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. How refreshing this must have been to the Saviour for a despised Samaritan to acknowledge Jesus, rather than the priest, as God's Representative working in power and grace on the earth, and if he was to glorify God it must surely be at the feet of Jesus who had healed him.

Our Lord said, "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." The others might show themselves to the priest, carrying out the letter of the Lord's instruction, but the stranger's heart was right, and acting in faith he came back to express his thanks and give glory to God at the feet of Jesus. Thus was God glorified as a poor leper was cleansed and made whole: so is He glorified when a cleansed sinner returns to give thanks before Him.

God glorified in giving sight to the blind

At the end of chapter 18 we have the familiar incident of the healing of blind Bartimaeus, who seized his opportunity to acknowledge the lowly Nazarene as the Son of David and to beseech His compassion. His faith and perseverance were rewarded, for the Lord stood still and commanded him to be called. When he was brought to Him He enquired as to his need and gave; all he asked, for immediately he received his sight. and followed Him, *glorifying God*: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. A beautiful sample of the blessing He will bring to Israel in the day of His power. Meanwhile God is surely glorified when the spiritually dead call upon Him in faith and receive their sight.

God glorified at the death of His Son

The crucifixion of Christ did not pass without a testimony from the world. W. Kelly wrote, "Nor did God permit that so stupendous an event as the death of His Son should leave unaffected that world which He had made, or that legal system which He had set up by Moses in the midst of His earthly people." The sun was darkened, and there

was darkness over the whole land: the veil of the temple too was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Thy hands, I commend My spirit". And having said thus He expired. Can we not say that death was under His perfect control? For had He not said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"? (John 10:17-18).

All this had an immediate effect on the Roman officer in charge of the crucifixion, for it is recorded that when the Centurion saw what was done, *he glorified God*, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). Mark tells us, And the centurion who stood by over against Him, when he saw that He had expired having thus cried out, said, "Truly this man was Son of God" (Mark 15:39 *New Trans.*).

But the mass of the people, the crowds that came together to see what was taking place, "beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned". And those who knew Him and were attached to Him, what of them? Alas, they were standing afar off in that day of the Lord's deepest humiliation, man's shame and Satan's power. "And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." How striking then that God, Who was glorified by the simple shepherd folk at His birth, should receive a testimony to His glory from a Roman centurion at His death!

SOME BETTER THING

T. BALDERSTON

4. THE WORD OF GOD AND THE WILDERNESS: HEBREWS 3:1 - 4:13

As he enters chapter 3, the inspired writer can gather together the rich fruits of his teaching thus far, in a loving appeal to his readers. Now at last he can address them as Christians.

Wherefore. In view of all that has been written concerning the Godhead and Manhood of Christ.

Holy. Actually, in themselves the readers were in a low state; this is why this epistle was being written. Nevertheless they had identified themselves with that "people" whom Christ had marked out for heaven by the blood of His propitiation.

Brethren. Natural affection was not the basis of this address, but the affection of Christ. At the meeting do you look to meet (i) formal acquaintances, (ii) congenial friends, or (iii) brethren of whom Christ is not ashamed?

Partakers. We are not left each to make our own way to heaven as best we can. At this present time "a heavenly calling" is the common and distinguishing property of the people for whom Christ died. Today, when in the assembly the tendency is for everyone to do "that which is right in his own eyes", the sense of the community of this

calling is much too weak.

Of a heavenly calling. The stress is on the character of the calling. The teaching of the epistle will work out the meaning of this in three great subjects — the perfected conscience, the path of faith, and the place before the face of God; and already chapter 2 has laid the groundwork. Our heavenly calling will be realised when we reach that supreme place, but we are not there yet. What we can have now is the perfected conscience that is the inward counterpart of the objective knowledge that Christ is there *for us*, and secondly, the faith that we belong there. This faith drives a wedge between the Christian and everything “of this first creation” that is esteemed valuable. *Heavenly* must stand in implicit opposition to *earthly*, or it is a redundant adjective. In the case of the first readers, this calling alienated them from a means of approach which God Himself had ordained. Those who had touched “the better thing” could not rest content any more with a system which was unable to perfect the worshipper’s conscience.

What about us today? Is there anything about us to show that we have heard the upward call “to everlasting day”, that “created things, though pleasant, now bear for us death’s stamp”? Or does our intemperate materialism, the feebleness of our “confession” before men, and the disappearance of the “language of heaven” from our conversation (or its survival only in hackneyed phrases) betray that we are perfectly content with earthly things and certainly do not relish the inconvenience of “a heavenly calling”? It is a matter of observation, that where the heavenly calling is little valued, the value put upon the cross, the blood, and the perfected conscience also diminishes.

Consider. This verb is the pivot of the sentence. It is the amplification of the “pay heed” (2:1) which follows the teaching of chapter 1. First the writer says, “Consider”, then he says, “Draw near” (10:22), and finally, “Run” (12:1). “Consider” governs, in effect, the entire long section from 3:1 to 10:18 (with the exception of the interruptions already described), since this is the section that deals with the Apostleship and High Priesthood of Christ. This “consideration” is the solid groundwork by which we have assurance of our access to God, and on which we regulate our behaviour in this world. “Considering” (i.e. serious study of the truths of Scripture) runs to seed when it never has any practical results, and this has brought it into disrepute. But the Scriptural pattern (it is also seen clearly in other epistles such as Romans and Ephesians) cannot be belittled on account of its abuse.

The readers lived in a hard world. The Lord’s return was delayed. The conversion of Israel for which they had probably looked (Acts 1:6, etc.), had not happened. The great pentecostal wonders, having fulfilled their purpose, seem to have been withdrawn (2:4 — “God bearing *them* witness”). Numbers were probably dwindling (6:4-6; 10:25). Emotion and exhortation without doctrine would not carry them much further. Only study of the Scriptures that lifted their thoughts away from themselves and their congregations entirely to Christ in glory and to the necessity of His being there, could carry them through. The writer does not proceed to the exhortation of the readers in themselves

before he has spent a long time anchoring their souls in a Person outside of themselves.

The Apostle and High Priest of our confession. This epistle is basically about access to God where He is, in heaven itself. Only God can initiate this access; He must open the way. This He has done in One who has come out from Him, to speak directly, immediately, on behalf of the divine throne. This is the *Apostle*. And it needs One from our side, so to speak, who can go in for us in righteousness, thus establishing a right of entry for us, and sustaining that right by His unalterable presence there. This is the *High Priest*. This is the great subject on which the writer focuses his readers' attention, Is any believer today indifferent to it?

Jesus. As in 2:9 the name is displaced for emphasis. This is the Name of which the enemy was trying to make them ashamed. And so the Holy Spirit directs their attention to that same Name, and shows them all the present glory that belongs to the One that bears it. And what a link with heaven this gives them! The great Apostle by whom God speaks to us, speaks "with a well known voice", and the great High Priest who represents us before God, acts with "a well known love".

Who was faithful. Or, as being faithful. From this verse to 4:13 the subject is the Apostleship of Christ. Its glory is its faithfulness. A spokesman is useless unless he faithfully reports the message entrusted to him. When Miriam and Aaron protested, "Hath the LORD spoken only to [mg. "through"] Moses?" (Numbers 12:2), the LORD Himself answered, by pointing to what Moses uniquely was to Him — "faithful in all mine house", and secondly, to what He was to Moses alone — One who spoke, not in visions or dark speeches, but "mouth to mouth" (12:6,8). This section of Hebrews clearly illustrates that not merely the brief O.T. allusions themselves (in 3:2,5), but the entire O.T. context of these allusions, controls the writer's argument.

A general lesson in this little clause should not pass unnoticed. Paul could write elsewhere in a similar context, "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). "Impact", and "ability to communicate" ought surely to be matters of concern to those who handle God's word today, but the primary requirement is *faithfulness*. In people like us, only constant exercise will yield faithfulness; it is not *merely* the repetition of familiar sentiments. Let us see that we do not debase the watchword "faithfulness" into an exoneration of empty Gospel meetings. Nevertheless, it is on their faithfulness that, in the end, our words will be judged.

Faithfulness, as also of course intimacy of revelation (1:1-2), pre-eminently characterises the Apostleship of the Son (cp. Revelation 1:1,5). The writer does not, however, go on to say that Christ was "more faithful" than Moses. Such an argument would only point to the perfection of the Lord's manhood. What the writer has in mind, in what follows, is not a distinction of degree, but of kind. Moses' faithfulness was a servant's faithfulness; Christ's faithfulness was a

Son's. Moses, says Numbers 12:7, was a servant in all God's house. What does this mean? What is the "house"? Emphasising its inclusivity (*all my house*) the Spirit identifies it with the sum of created things (*all things* — 3:4; cp. 1:2, 2:8, etc.). Moses himself was a part of that creation, a member of that "household". Appropriately, then, Numbers speaks of him as "servant". But Christ, as Son, created it, as already shown from Scripture (1:10-12), and this marks Him out as God. His faithfulness must then be in a totally different category from Moses'! That our Apostle is *Jesus* (3:1) can never obliterate the Godhead that sets Him apart from all His servants.

The drastic implications of this argument for his readers are set out in 3:5-6. In these verses also a transition occurs in the meaning of "house". The "house" (or, "household") is that system or sphere in which everything is in order, according to the word of God, and therefore stands in true relationship to Him.

In this terrestrial creation ("habitable earth" in 2:5 is cognate with "house") that order was destroyed by Adam's fall. How can it be reconstituted? There was a time when, in a limited way, this "order" was to be manifested by the "House of Israel" through obedience to the word faithfully reported by Moses. However, though on the manward side Israel was disobedient (and is held responsible for its disobedience, as this chapter goes on to show), it was in fact never God's intention that the "order" declared in Moses' word should be final. Both insofar as it was directly prophetic (Deuteronomy 18:15) and in virtue of the very imperfection of the order it declared (as argued later in the epistle—e.g. 9:8), it was *a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after* — by *Christ*, the fulfiller of the promises. Here Christ is not viewed as the Man who more than made good what Adam lost, but as God the Son, whose word, because He is Son, must be final. *Of [Him] we are house* (3:6) — not "*the house*". God's order is infallibly established in the universal administration about to be exercised by His Son, but in this world it is as yet only manifested by those who honour Him while yet they cannot see Him. This they do by the *boldness* and *hope* that flows from their faith in His word and work. Those who subordinate Christ's word to Moses' word cannot now be said to be "hearing God's voice" at all.

With the "if" of 3:6 a warning note is sounded. The writer does not discriminate in his address between those who are truly Christians, and those who merely claim to be so. He has many assurances for those who are true, of which 2:10-18 is a magnificent specimen, but he is equally worried by those "Christians" whose hearts are not in it, for their condition is much more serious than that of "mere" unbelievers (6:6, 10:29). However, the writer does not address the two groups separately; the true-hearted themselves are by no means above the warning he is about to make. "It is a warning against [sc. "abandoning the path of faith"] that arrests the living. The dead — they whose consciences are not engaged, and who do not say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" — despise the warning and perish" (J.N.D. *Synopsis, ad. loc.*).

The warning quoted in 3:7-11 comes from Psalm 95:8-11. The core of it is, "Harden not your hearts", and this is reinforced by the example of Israel in the wilderness. "Provocation" and "temptation" are translations of "Meribah" and "Massah", and refer to the smiting of the rock in Exodus 17:7 when the children of Israel "tempted the LORD saying, Is the LORD amongst us or not?" This was at the beginning of the wilderness journey, but a similar thing happened at the end (Numbers 20:2-13). Thus, they had "seen his works forty years", and the only conclusion could be, "They do *always* err in their hearts; and they have not known my ways".

What of us? Have we "known His ways"? To our puritan and evangelical predecessors, a sustained scrutiny of God's ways with them was a matter of great importance; the now decaying practice of keeping a diary largely arises from it. How much of our lack of power and of pastoral effectiveness arises from a prolonged failure to acquaint ourselves with God's ways with us, both individually and collectively (cp. also Deuteronomy 8:2)?

Take heed brethren. As the writer begins his "comment" on the quotation from the Psalm (3:12-15), he focuses on the warning, "Harden not your hearts" (3:12-15). Today, to "hear God's voice", one must *hear the Son*, and not simply or primarily Moses at all; "to fall away" again into the Sinai-system again would now be to *fall away from the living God*.

Apostasy is not the outcome of weakness; it is a thing that begins in the heart (3:12), and in Scripture the heart is not so much the seat of the affections or emotions as the seat of the moral being, where the deepest resolutions are made. Apostasy is an individual act (*any one of you*), but it arises in an environment of spiritual slackness, so that the appropriate counter-action is mutual exhortation in which all the company participates (and not merely admonition of potential apostates by the leaders). As we observe the slow decay of the "open ministry meeting", and our general slowness to attend "fellowship meetings" and encourage brethren in other places, we have to pass over this verse with embarrassed silence.

Verse 15 is better taken as rounding off 3:12-14 by repetition of the quotation, than as introducing 3:16-19, whose only link with it is the verb "provoke". The last four verses of the chapter are parenthetical. By fixing the historical identity of the "generation" of which the Psalm speaks, they prepare the way for the next chapter. They make another important identification. They state that the root cause of "hardness of heart" is unbelief, an unbelief that, having seen the wonderful works of God, could still say, "Is the LORD amongst us or not?" This unbelief in the works of God extended to the words of God concerning His rest. And this is what chapter 4 goes on to show: it passes on from the exposition of "Harden not your hearts" to "They shall not enter my rest". The whole section 3:6 - 4:13 is about unbelief, and parallels chapter 11, the chapter of faith.

Let us fear therefore. Like the wilderness generation, the first readers too had had good news preached to them concerning the rest of God. Would they too greet it with unbelief (4:1-2)? It requires faith

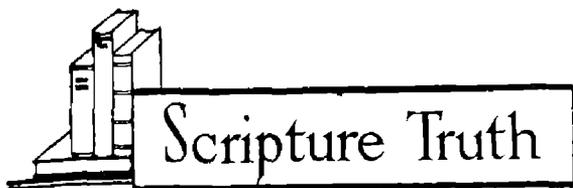
to enter; this can be inferred from the Psalm, for it is explicitly on the grounds of their *unbelief* ("tempting", "proving") that the wilderness generation failed to enter (4:3).

The writer must, however, consider the objection to his interpretation that, if the first wilderness generation did not enter, the second did. This would seem to foreclose the possibility of a *future* rest, but, as the writer assures us, it does not. In the Psalm, God speaks of *My rest*; this obviously takes our thoughts to Genesis 2:2 and to God's rest from the works of creation. The character of His rest is, then, cessation from labour (4:3-4, 10). If then the rest were already being enjoyed, the Psalm would not have *defined*, long after Israel had entered the Land, *another day* of opportunity. The fact that the readers still lived in a day of faith and of the possibility of unbelief showed that the rest of which the Psalm spoke, the rest from toil and seeking, was not yet here. This is the gist of 4:3-11.

The readers lived (I suppose) in the Land which Deuteronomy 12:9 called "rest". But they did not have it *as* rest. By teaching them that the rest of God was still to come, the writer taught them not to rest content with present things. Though in the Land, they too were in the wilderness. This was the patriarchs' attitude (11:9).

We ought, however, to beware of an almost universal over-interpretation of this passage which in fact destroys its sense. Many excellent commentators hold that the writer's purpose, in identifying the "rest" with Genesis 2:2, is to *exclude* the notion that Canaan can be that rest; to underline that the rest is not earthly, but heavenly; Canaan was but a type of it. If we accept this line of interpretation, God was leading Israel of old on by a chimera, a mirage. They did not enter because of unbelief, true; but even had they believed, they still could not have entered, because Canaan is not, after all, the rest. Obviously this line of interpretation undermines the stress on the consequences of unbelief that is the core of these two chapters. In the main, Hebrews is not a typological epistle, but a comparative. It is true that Moses' apostleship could not be final (3:6), but *Christ brings to pass even the promises concerning the Land*. Previously the writer has spoken of the heavenly glory awaiting his readers (2:10 with 3:1). Here his interpretation is confined to what Psalm 95 will bear. It will only disclose that the rest is still to come. Not until chapter 11 will he expound Scriptures that permit the inference of "a better country" (11:8-16). But even there, the promises concerning the Land are not violated. As might be expected, the matter is well dealt with in J.N.D. *Synopsis*, vol. 5, p. 200 (Stow Hill Edn.).

The section dealing with the Apostleship ends with the stern warning of 4:12-13. But we must leave this to another article.



MAY, 1981

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

THE CARPENTER

JOHN BARNES

A number of years ago I was privileged to visit Israel. One of the places we looked at was the Christian hospital in Nazareth, the town where the Lord Jesus spent His Boyhood and early Manhood. Among many other things we were shown the hospital chapel and were interested in the pulpit which has an unusual design. The side facing the hall is carved to represent a working carpenter's bench with its vice and other equipment, as though to indicate that the Lord Jesus still has work to do. This is true even on the person in whom the operation of God has produced the "inner man" who delights in the things of God. It is a suggestive thought and forms the basis of this simple meditation.

It is striking that, while elsewhere the Lord is referred to as the carpenter's Son, in the Gospel of Mark He is called the Carpenter (6:3). We understand this brief Gospel to be the record of His service and this term may be used in keeping with that theme. While no one could say with certainty, it may be that Joseph had died early and that the Lord Jesus took over the care of His mother and the younger children. If this were so He would naturally carry on the family business of carpentry in which He would often have helped. So He would be the town carpenter for a number of years.

In Scripture wood is sometimes used as a figure of humanity. If we adopt the thought of the Lord Jesus as the divine Carpenter working on the woody fabric of our persons and lives, a number of thoughts are suggested.

Raw timber is unsuitable for immediate use. It is too full of sap and moisture and has to be carefully seasoned before being used. Man is a creature much inclined to rush into things, sometimes in self-sufficiency or in pride, but maybe more often in impatience or impetuosity. The Lord may have to keep His servant waiting many years in seeming uselessness before He employs him in the service He has for him to do. Even a great and intelligent servant like Moses was too hasty and had to be put in the maturing kiln for many more years before he was ready for the tremendous task the Lord wished him to do. The seasoning process tries our patience, but this is part of the plan. Someone has written:

"I say, Hurry; God says, Patience, wait!"

So the Lord may leave us in the seasoning yard, being brought to maturity. If this seasoning process were not carried out, timber could

twist and warp in use which would diminish or even destroy its value in future service.

Raw timber has bumps, knobs and projections which have to be removed. In days gone by the adze was much used in this rough-hewing work. We are full of such ugly projections which require the attention of the Carpenter. These valueless bumps are cut away by the careful application of the sharp cutting blade of the adze wielded by a skilful hand. No doubt this is a painful process but it is necessary to the formation of our lives as the Lord prepares us for His service.

When the saw is used it can only *reduce* in length or breadth or thickness. Man always needs to be reduced in the presence of God. So often we have some notion of our importance or think that if we were only bigger in some way we should be more serviceable. This is a mistake; we need to be smaller and the Lord Jesus has to work on us to cut us down to size — His size, the size He wants us to be. Our ideas of things differ greatly from His. "My thoughts are not your thoughts." If we are to be useful we have to be serviceable and to be truly serviceable we must be servants of all. This is tough work and entails the use of the saw, often cutting right across the grain of our thoughts. But the Carpenter knows what He wants to do with us. He may cut away the softer sapwood and leave the stronger, more durable heart wood for His use. Indeed, He says to us, "My son, give Me thy heart". Nebuchadnezzar learned what it was to be cut down. In the pride of his heart he became lifted up but the Lord cut him down. What lessons he learned during that severe and painful period.

Timber is generally squared as it is being prepared for use. This work entails the use of the square and the straight-edge. These instruments are applied, not merely to show up irregularities but, in order that the irregularities, so exposed, may be removed. The idea of the straight-edge may remind us that the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. Wholly righteous in Himself, He requires that character in His servants. So the Carpenter will work on us and in us to develop that which is pleasurable to Him and which meets His requirements.

Wood also needs to be planed. Even when much has been done there remains a certain roughness and unevenness which calls for correction. We are all conscious of the need for this work in our lives. The effect of this process can be detected in the lives of the saints. Moses, whose fervid zeal led to the killing of an Egyptian foreman, became the meekest man in all the earth. We can see it in Peter. His epistles show him as a man in whom this work had been done and we can see the results of it. The man who denied his Lord with oaths and curses advises us against "all evil speakings". It is remarkable that one who was often so rash in speech should advise, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God". Other indications can be traced. Paul whose early days were filled with violence, took on the "meekness and gentleness of Christ". What activities of the plane in the hands of the Lord had wrought such changes in these men!

Boards are generally fitted together with other pieces of timber to build things. Doors, windows, furniture, are all constructed of pieces of wood of varying sizes and shapes. Each piece has to be dovetailed or

jointed in some other way to other pieces of wood in order to fit into and form part of the whole structure. This process requires much patient work with the dovetail saw or the chisel as adjustments are made to make this jointing possible. The Ephesian epistle speaks of the saints as being "compacted together", and of the oneness which the Lord has in mind. Bits and pieces of every one of us have to be cut away and shaped to achieve this end.

When the whole article of furniture is put together various oils are applied both to preserve the wood and to bring out the beauty of its grain and formation. Perhaps the Holy Spirit of God could be thought of in this way, for oil is often used in the Bible as a figure of the Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit from the Father in order that, among His many offices, this work too should be done. May we be helped to be subject in the Lord's hand that what He has in mind for us may be carried out as the roughness and obtuseness of our lives and persons are subjected to adjustment in His skilful hands, that we may be available for Him and His service.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

COLIN CURRY

"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

John 6:35,32.

The profound meaning of the words "I am", used by our Lord in John 8:58, was considered in the previous paper. The words "I am the bread of life", while also pointing to His great Person, emphasise His sufficiency in a particular context. He is the Supplier and Sustainer of life. These words are appropriately the first of a whole sequence of statements of a similar kind found in John's Gospel. While the simple word "I am" fixes attention on the absolute Being of our Lord, "I am the bread of life" shows how the life of believers is closely dependent on Himself. Our life as believers is inseparable from Him; we received the Gift of life in receiving Him, and it is sustained by feeding on Him.

The chapter opens with the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, one of the "signs" (pointers to the glory of the Person who enacted them) included by John in his Gospel; see John 20:30,31. The discourse on the bread of life arises out of this incident. The mass-following of Christ after the miracle was mostly of a superficial kind. But, with the miracle in the background, our Lord uses the simple figures of "bread", and of "eating", to highlight the deeper needs of men, and to present Himself as the One who can meet these needs. The multitude had been starving. They had gladly partaken of the physical relief He provided so liberally. They were pursuing Him for more. But He now underlines their more fundamental needs; the need of *life* from Him which is far more than daily existence, living on material supplies; and the need for continuous drawing on Him who makes Himself available so readily. As often, particularly in this Gospel, the outward appeal of our Lord's actions attracts many; but His words, while

gracious, are searching words. A great discrimination amongst His hearers goes on as He speaks. There are those who are mystified by His words, who have no taste for the spiritual realities He offers. Many turn back; His words are "hard sayings" which they have no will to accept. Yet also there are those who cling to Him, finding that He is all that He claims, and entering in some degree into the realities of which He speaks.

We take in turn the simple notions of "bread" and "eating", commonplace in everyday life, and note how our Lord uses these matters as illustrations of higher-level realities. He presents Himself as the *true* bread, and encourages us to find and to know Him in this character. We shall conclude with a short paragraph on the opposite reactions to our Lord apparent in the chapter, becoming more definite as He spoke. Still today a great separation between hearers takes place, as people react personally to this great claim, "I am the bread of life".

Bread

In speaking about *bread* the Lord Jesus raises the subject of basic requirements for life. In referring to "the *true* bread from heaven" He points to Himself as the great Essential for life, of which bread on the physical plane is the merest indication. *He* is the genuine Supplier of Life of the highest kind. Eternal life, which endures and satisfies, is known on receiving Him.

The expression "the *true* bread from heaven" is also contrasted with the Manna in the wilderness. His questioners, recently well-fed in the physical sense, raise the matter of the Manna. With short memories of the great sign they had witnessed, they go back in thought to the provision of Manna when, led by Moses, their forefathers covered the long trek through the wilderness. To them, with their materialistic view, a sustained supply (as was given under Moses for long years) was a greater thing than Christ had done, which they challenge Him to equal. Not content with one sign they want more. Full stomachs were their main aim in life, as He had already pointed out. But He will not accept a high view of Moses which disparages Himself. Moses was *not* the giver of the Manna, it came down from heaven; and it was but the figure of what was incomparably greater, the true bread from heaven, the Gift of His Father, come down amongst men to do the will of Him that sent Him. The gift of "life unto the world", widely directed in its scope, was accessible in Himself. Later verses make it plain that His death, as well as His incarnation, was vital if such a great Gift were to be available. A man lives for ever if "the bread of life" is received; while on the contrary their fathers, though they ate Manna in the wilderness, were dead.

Bread as *gift* from God, bread that *came down* from heaven, bread as *food* in sustained and abundant supply, bread maintaining *life* where survival would be impossible: in all these ways the Manna prefigured "the true bread from heaven". But the figure fell far short of the reality. He came down, not from the physical heavens, but from the eternal heavenly realm. The principle of life, the gift of life, was actually embodied in Himself. Unlike the Manna, He was "the living

bread", bread that brought life, *offering* it in Himself as well as feeding that life where by faith He was received. The satisfactions which the Manna provided were of bodily needs; it renewed their physical strength day by day. Their physical lives were sustained by it; the process could continue without inward faith; many ultimately expired in the wilderness through unbelief. They knew hunger, recurring daily; nor were they deeply satisfied with their lot as they crossed the desert. How different is our Lord's promise to any who partake of "the bread of life"! "If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever". Eternal life now, for the one who eats, and resurrection too at the last day. How this surpasses in extent the earthly norm of "threescore years and ten": and surely in quality it outshines by far the common round of life, often lacking in lustre, sometimes not without its tedium. In this expression, "the bread of life", our emphasis can be on the word *life*! In Him, and in Him alone, is this life which has vitality and joy, life which is fadeless indeed and totally satisfying.

Eating

The true bread, then, is available plentifully in our Lord. But He emphasises the other side of the picture too. Bread is for *eating*. "If a man eat thereof he shall live for ever". In a number of ways in these verses our Lord describes a right manner of approach to Himself, which will partake of Him as the living bread. He decries their zeal for Him as a miracle-worker, their thinking of Him as One likely to advance their material prosperity, and to increase their status as a nation. He calls it labouring "for the meat that perisheth". He advocates a setting of their sights in another direction entirely. Let them get an appetite for the heavenly food, without which no earthly plenitude can meet their real needs and cravings. Priority for the *vital* matters, *appetite* for meat that endures and satisfies, a glimpse that in Himself there are great stores that lie in a realm above and beyond all earthly horizons; *this* kind of discernment is almost the first essential. Bread for needy souls may be available; but if the appetites and the energies of men are misdirected, then the emptiness will remain.

Notice also the way in which *believing on* Him and *coming to* Him, are repeatedly mentioned as vital to the receiving of the bread of life. There are several references, but (for example) verse 35, quoted at the beginning, couples the two. Verse 29 is an unambiguous answer to their query, too. What is vital is belief on Him whom God has sent. Belief on our Lord is more than just respect for Him, agreeing with Him. It is a dependent and trustfully reliant approach to Him. Those coming to Him in that way find a sure welcome; He will in no wise cast them out. Faith is casting oneself upon Him; it is an entrance into all that He supplies, even into life itself in Him. Faith sees far more in Him than the unrenewed man discerns. Observe how "seeing the Son" and "believing" are coupled together in verse 40. Beholding the glory of the Word become flesh is the great attraction towards the Lord Jesus, and the great impetus for faith.

Let us observe, too, how our Lord alludes to the inward work of

God which brings about a true discernment of Himself. The Father draws individuals to Him; no man comes apart from this. A proper response to Him is the outcome of being taught of God (verses 44, 45). How humbly thankful every true soul should be that he has learnt to move towards the Lord Jesus, and has been granted that vision of Himself which promotes the response of faith.

Now let us think along the lines suggested by the picture of *eating*, by which our Lord indicates a true assimilation of Himself as the bread of life. It becomes more prominent in the discourse in its later stages. Eating is primarily *intake*; and that intake takes place in a close, pervasive, and organic fashion. At our conversion we are received by our Lord; He welcomes us unreservedly. But also, *we receive Him*; we *take in* and benefit from all that He brings to us. In truth, we have nothing of true substance without Him. He *brings* life into our state of death and emptiness. Except we eat, we have no life whatever in us (verse 53). In natural things, food only sustains life and in no sense gives it: the material figure serves only to direct our thoughts to a great fact which surpasses it. The Lord Jesus, received and appropriated by ourselves, brings and gives life to us (in a thorough and inward sense), and moreover He fully sustains that life too. He removes for ever our hungering and thirsting (which again is not a characteristic of ordinary food).

“The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (verse 51). At this stage in the passage our Lord speaks more openly of what is basic to this offer of life, and this possibility of receiving life, in Himself. His flesh would be given, His life laid down; only through *that* momentous act would life for men be on offer. What a tremendous and critical climax to the story of the incarnation that was! He came down from heaven, He *became* flesh and dwelt among us, the Son of God, yet also the lowly perfect Son of Man: and that Coming had one objective always in view; He came to die! The flesh and the blood of the Son of Man (separately mentioned, indicating His life yielded up in death) are of absolute importance for any entry into the life spoken of here by our Lord. Our life in Him springs from His death.

Attention to the tenses in verses 53 and 54 is important. There is an initial eating and drinking, without which no life is possessed (verse 53). The translation “Except ye shall have eaten . . .” highlights the meaning. Life *begins* by appropriation of the Christ who died. But then verse 54 speaks of eating and drinking which go on steadily. Life *continues* by appropriating Him, and all the implications of His death. It is a life which draws on Him and abides in Him. We may be thankful that our life in Christ is not first and foremost a matter of what we understand; it comes from receiving Him in faith. But these expressions do suggest processes which are real and not shallow. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood in the first place is the way into life; it is conversion, it is acceptance of a gift, and yet it suggests a serious process too. The meaning of the death of the Son of Man sobers the person who considers it at all properly, it underlines our state of lostness and total lifelessness without it, as well as opening a door into

a rich life with Him beyond it. So too the activity of continuing to feed on Christ (and, in particular, on the meaning and the issues of His death) is a humbling and thorough process, which makes nothing of ourselves but increasingly enhances our appreciation of our Lord. Awareness of Christ, and of our living links with Him, are central to the very nature of this life He has opened up for us.

Finally, let us be amazed at the comparison which He makes in verse 57. *As He liveth by the Father, so "he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me"*. That closeness of His life with the Father, living here on His account, drawing from Him in the most intimate way, is suggested as the pattern for our life, as believers, with our Lord. Such is the nature of the close bond with our Lord into which this feeding on Him brings us. Let us be feeding on Him in this manner, and living and alert in the great area of things where He is supreme.

Reactions

Sadly the majority gave an unreceptive hearing to these words from the Lord Jesus. Their values were so distorted that they could not sense the high offer that He made. Material objectives so filled their minds that "bread from heaven" and "eternal life" meant little to them. They were biased against Him; they did not hesitate to murmur, though they had accepted His bounty. He did not match their ideas as a leader, a Messiah, a person whose word was to be accepted. Their own prejudices and preferences shaped their decisions, and dulled their hearing. In their own judgment they knew enough about Him already, though it was much less than the truth. The prevailing view about Him was accepted casually without verification. To them He was too lowly, in a sense too ordinary, a figure for His claims to be respected, for His words to be weighed. How often still the common view, the general climate of opinion, the familiarity of His Name, shuts the ears of men to His words and His gifts. His words expose the low targets in life that men pursue; they expose also the superficiality of many a nominal user of His Name, supposedly a follower of Him. They turn away; they prefer to go on hungering and thirsting.

But there are those who discover the truth of His words in spite of the general unbelief. How large a company this must really be, since those words became part of the written word, and by the Holy Spirit have affected readers over long years. What a sample of such persons, and of their confidence in Him, is found in Simon Peter as he speaks for the few at the close of the chapter! The hesitance, the murmuring, the perplexity of the crowd, so prominent earlier in the account, is not shared by him, nor by others like him. Boldly and firmly he voices their attachment to Christ. What to the crowd, and to the mere followers, had been hard sayings, were to him "the words of the eternal life". The One who spoke those words was no less than "the Christ, the Son of the living God". The unwavering sureness, and the vigour, of this pronouncement, showed clearly the reality of the bond with His Lord which prompted him to speak in that manner. How it contrasts, too, with the weakness and vacillations of the many, who could only voice their perplexity, and say (not entirely correctly) "Is not this Jesus,

whose father and mother we know? how is it that He says, I came down from heaven?"'. Peter had still a great deal to learn, but he had a decisive clarity on the key issue; and he could not and would not withdraw from the great experience he had entered in his personal and living link with the Lord.

BIBLE STUDY: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA—J. S. BLACKBURN

3. RAHAB'S FAITH, CHAPTER 2

We are introduced in this chapter to two individuals among the thousands of Canaanites, whose destruction had come so near (vv. 1-7). One of these, Rahab, makes a very full confession of her knowledge and faith (vv. 8-13), and makes a plea for shelter under the wings of the God of Israel (vv. 12, 13). The spies pledge Rahab's salvation from the impending destruction of the city, together with her father's household (vv. 14-17), give her a token in the scarlet cord (vv. 18-20) and, after three days' hiding, returned across the river to Joshua (vv. 21-24).

In seeking to seize the lessons of this narrative, we return to the thought, just mentioned, that here is a view of the thoughts and actions of two individuals during "the last days of" Jericho. The king need not detain us long. Kingship is a most important concept in Scripture, and "king" is one of the words frequently recurring in this book of Scripture. The typical meaning of these petty kings of Canaan is not far to seek, and will come before us in studying later chapters.

The case of Rahab is different, in that she is singled out three times for mention in the New Testament. She is introduced in v. 1: they "came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there". She makes an immediate impression as a resourceful woman, ready for immediate decision and action. But she was an evil member of an accursed race, even if not a priestess of the Canaanite religion. Such is the person in Jericho to whom the God of Israel had reached out His hand, and granted her convictions which bring her into salvation. The narrative before us provides occasion for reflection on three themes:

1. "The wrath to come".
2. "By faith Rahab . . . perished not".
3. "Thou shalt utterly destroy them".

1. Jericho is presented to us as a city where everyone knew that destruction was coming. The king on his throne knew it, and his most depraved subject knew it also. For forty years they had been aware of a new people, in itself frightened and undisciplined, but moving under the power and direction of its God, Jehovah, and (if we imagine the thoughts of the inhabitants of Jericho), creeping slowly but inexorably across the desert. They had heard about the Red Sea, forty years earlier; they knew about the two kings of the Amorites, so near now in time and place. They knew that Israel's God had given them the land of Canaan, to destroy its inhabitants, and to possess it.

Is not this a picture, true in detail after detail, of the present age and world? Its judgment is surely coming. It has been announced in the Word. It has been ceaselessly proclaimed by the preaching of the Word. Thousands have, like Rahab in her time and place, taken the opportunity the warning provides to secure salvation.

The "wrath to come" was the burden of John Baptist. "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The "wrath to come" is not the last judgment of the great white throne. In the vials containing the seven last plagues is "filled up the wrath of God" (Revelation 16:1). The vials are the final act of destruction before the Coming of Christ in power and glory. It is the time when, to use another figure, He shall "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9 N.Tr.) Perhaps the wrath to come on the lips of John Baptist was the destruction of Jerusalem, but in the setting of 1 Thessalonians there can be no question that it is the wrath connected with Christ's Second Advent. God's Son was their Deliverer from the wrath to come.

These thoughts about Jericho and Rahab should certainly stimulate the Christian in his witness, a witness so effectively in operation in Thessalonica as noted just now. The word of the Lord, as witnessed in their faith to God-ward, sounded out in every place, since they themselves had found in God's Son, about to come from heaven, a Deliverer from the "wrath to come". The Lord was speaking to the disciples of the moment, any moment, "when he cometh" that He said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning". In this world in which we live, the darkness deepens; it is always dark, and thus the disciples are always to have "lights burning".

2. Rahab's confession occupies vv. 9-11. Examination of these three verses will direct special attention to four words: "We heard . . . I know". "Who hath believed our report" asks the prophet: involved in Rahab's confession is faith in a report heard, a conviction based in the facts reported and accepted. Only thus could she say, "I know". And what was the knowledge confessed? First, "that Jehovah hath given you the land", and then, "Jehovah your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath". Such a confession, from one nurtured in the religion of Canaan, is most profoundly significant. We are so accustomed to the truth that our God is the sole and sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, that the extraordinary nature of the new faith now dwelling in Rahab can easily pass us by.

By divine grace and providence, the opportunity, the single great opportunity of her life, presented itself to her by the coming of the spies to her house. She seized it, and came to Jehovah, Israel's God, in the manner in which Boaz described the action of Ruth, "Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2:12).

This faith was manifested by Rahab's acceptance of and action on the promise of the spies, shown in action when she bound the scarlet cord in the window. There was faith also in her whole attitude towards the spies. If Rahab was a corrupt member of a corrupt race, the Israel represented by the spies was a wandering collection of tribes, without home or land, a mysterious horde of nomads born in the desert. Her faith saw them as the people of God before they were manifested as

such in Canaan. In this there is a hint of the faith of Moses, "choosing . . . to suffer affliction with the people of God", even if in her case, she was escaping the destruction decreed by Israel's God.

If we look for a moment at James 2:25 in the light of v. 21 of the same chapter, we conclude that Rahab already had faith when she received the spies. It is in her *action* of receiving them that she comes before us in James, and the context shows that faith comes before the works there being made prominent.

The *promise* of the spies could only have meaning if two conditions were fulfilled. The first is that the spies must survive. Only if there was living witness in the camp of Israel whence the destruction was imminent could effect be given to the promise. The second is that the eye of the destroyer must light on the scarlet cord. In the glorious gospel of Christ, these two conditions are triumphantly satisfied in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in His session in "heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24), and in the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat. In the Passover also we see this essential gospel truth: "when I see the blood, I will pass over you".

Perhaps the greatest mark of the action of grace in Rahab's coming to the God of Israel is her place in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel (1:3-5) we find a place given in the genealogy to four women; Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and the wife of Urias. None of these would be reckoned, by nature, race or practice, as a candidate for a place when the God of Israel made up beforehand the line of blessing through the Messiah. We have taken account of her brilliant faith to which God responded by putting her in this honoured place in Scripture.

When the Gospel-minded believer in God's use of types and illustrations of New Testament truth in the Old Testament reads the word "scarlet" in connection with the true token in our narrative, he needs no explanation to see suggested in it the scarlet line of salvation through the blood of Christ which runs through Scripture, and ends in the praises of heaven. I have been struck by a sentence in a thoroughly unbelieving author* (so far as the inspiration of the Scripture is concerned): "With regard to the colour of the thread, it reminds me curiously of the blood with which the Israelites in Egypt had to sprinkle the lintels of their doors during the last plague".

3. We can discern some features in the narrative of these chapters, which seem to connect the destruction of Jericho with the judgment of God about to fall on the world. The seven circuits of the city with trumpets cannot but bring to mind the fearful inflictions of the seven trumpets of Revelation 8:7 to 11:15, leading to the seven vials in which is filled up the wrath of God. Whatever we may think and say about the horrors of the Israelite invasion of Canaan, applies with sevenfold force to the period when the wrath of God strikes the world.

In reading these chapters in Joshua, and indeed the whole context of the invasion in the Old Testament history, we cannot but be appalled by the words, so frequently repeated, "utterly destroy". This

*Soggin, "Joshua", p. 42.

was not a small event; it was what is called today a genocide. This can be seen most clearly in Deuteronomy 7. "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee . . . thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt [show no] mercy unto them . . . ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire" (vv. 1-5).

To see this genocide in its true light we must first seize the concept of Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the Judge of the nations. God is the Last Judge of all men, and this judgment will appear at the great white throne. But His judgments as Judge of the nations are seen in history, especially Bible history. What lies before us in Joshua is a capital sentence by the righteous and merciful Judge, on the nations inhabiting Canaan. Such a sentence, like any other capital sentence, is as much designed, by perfect love and wisdom, for the preservation of the rest of mankind as for the maintenance of justice. Indeed, the two are inseparable. Large sections of the prophetic Books come into focus for us when we remember the fact of the distinct work of God as the Governor of the nations, as distinct from the last judgment of all the dead (see Isaiah 13 to 23, and Ezekiel 25 to 32).

Two episodes in the life of Abraham connect with these thoughts. In Genesis 15:16 Abram learns that there would be a delay in the accomplishment of the promise to bring Abram's seed into Canaan. In v. 13 we read of four hundred years in Egypt. The reason for the delay is given: "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full". By implication, when we arrive at the beginning of the Book of Joshua, then the iniquity of the nations inhabiting Canaan had developed to such a point that the Judge of all the earth must decree extinction. The aspect of merciful preservation by this divine decree for Israel, and indeed for the earth, is seen in Deuteronomy 20:16-18. "Of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them . . . that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods." See also Leviticus 18:25-29. "And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants . . . Ye shall . . . not commit any of these abominations . . . that the land spue not you out also . . . Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any of these abominable customs".

In Genesis 18:25 we find Abraham appalled at the prospect of the Lord's destruction of the cities of the plain; but his faith comes to rest in the declaration: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

SOME BETTER THING

T. BALDERSTON

5. THE WORD AND THE PRIEST, HEBREWS 4:12 - 5:14

In 4:11 the writer concluded his application of Psalm 95 with the words, "Let us labour [or, use diligence] to enter that rest". The basis of this exhortation is not just the writer's own earnestness, his own knowledge of God, even his own words inspired though they are, but (as an example to *us*) *the written word of God*, represented by the Psalm. *For the word of God is living and operative* (4:12). The living word of the living God is not just a tool the preacher can use as he pleases. It has Life of its own. Even many Christians fall into the subconscious (but Satanic) trap of removing themselves from the judgment of the Word on the grounds that, "different people can quote verses to prove different things". Of course, this happens. Scripture is abused by selective quotation. It is our duty, and that of the company of believers, to follow the divinely given example of this writer, to search the Scripture, to compare Scripture with Scripture, in order to reach that which *God* says to us in it, and not to stop when we find our own reflection.

This Word (here, Psalm 95) accurately pinpointed the condition of these readers — hardness of heart, or the danger of it. This shows it to be the sharp and piercing word which reveals to us our consciences naked in His sight. Sheer introspection, however prayerful, will never be able to distinguish the mixture of motives that lies behind all that we do. Only a standard of judgment wholly outside of ourselves, applied by the Spirit, can do that. "Charismatics" are in great danger of forgetting this. It should be our constant aim, individually and collectively, privately and publicly, to search out the ways in which our hearts, our thoughts, our practices, our meetings, even our gospel work, are removed (maybe unintentionally) from the judgment of the Word and obedience to it. This is true progress. How many of us are standing still?

Why is it that so often we read the Word of God without experiencing its judging and liberating power? Would the writer not have found the reason in the Psalm he has just applied? *Hardness of heart* (3:8). Long inuring to the Word means that most of us actually have to make an effort, not just to hear the Word, but to listen, not only to read it, but to apply it specifically. The writer however, does not sympathise, as modern evangelistic theorists do, with his readers' culturally induced "word-resistance". He does not dress Psalm 95 up to make it more interesting. He knows no other way to make God present to his readers in judgment and grace. Are *we* reading God's Word now, with open eyes for the things God has to say to us in *today*?

Having therefore a great high priest (4:14). Abruptly, the epistle turns from the Word which exposes our wilfulness, to the One who sympathises with our weakness. The positive follows the negative, by resuming the subject at 3:1. Our High Priest is *great* firstly, because He

has passed through the heavens. He, and He only, has completed the journey to the throne. That journey began at the cross, which is the antitype of the brazen altar. Calvary was the Court of the heavenly Tabernacle (9:14, 23). The journey continued through the created heavens, which may correspond to the Holy Place. It ended at the throne of God — the Holiest of all, and there He, as it were, presented His blood — for us.

His greatness is also to be seen in His Names. *Jesus the Son of God.* Chapter 1 considered Him as Son of God; chapter 2, as Jesus. Now we see the importance of these two chapters to the chief subject of our epistle. As *Son of God* our High Priest has power to bring us to God, for in Himself He is most truly God (1:10-12) — “God of God”. *He is able* to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. There is no distance on that side. This is the subject of chapter 7.

As *Jesus* He is most truly Man as we are men, but without sin. *He is able* to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. There is no distance on this side either. This is the subject of this section.

It is to the statement of the greatness of our High Priest, in His place and in His person, that the exhortation, *Let us hold fast the confession*, is annexed. The point of our holding on at all is proportional to the greatness of the Person whose Name we confess. In trying to hold fast, however, we meet many temptations, or trials. And so before the writer goes on to spell out the competence that exists in the Person and finished work of our High Priest to bring us to God, He pauses first of all to describe the sweetness of His character toward us. *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.* For hardness of heart and unbelief there was no sympathy. But even when we have brought these under the judging power of the Word, the weakness of “frail humanity” remains. The Lord does not condone murmuring, but He recognises all our needs. That Israel murmured at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, and at Massah and Meribah (to mention but a few!) was sin, and did not remain unjudged; nevertheless the water was made sweet, the manna given, the flesh rained from heaven, the rock opened. The Lord knew the need. And how much more now! *For He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin* (4:15).

If the greatness of His Person provided the grounds for holding fast the confession, the sweetness of His character forms the incentive to *draw near* (4:16). This is a critical verb in Hebrews; occurring seven times, its use furnishes a complete outline of the central teaching of the epistle (4:16, 7:25, 10:1, 22; 11:6, 12:18, 22). God has enabled us in Christ to draw near to Himself where He is, to enjoy His things, and for His own purposes. But what grace that first of all, to train us to make use of our access to the throne, He permits us to approach, not specifically to magnify His own greatness and glory at all, but to gain help in our need. He has magnified His grace by making it the defining characteristic of His throne (4:16). There we have to do with One who not only surveys our need omnisciently, but who (since it became *God*) was “made perfect through sufferings”, who “learned obedience by the things that He suffered”, in order that He might be equipped to

bring many sons to glory. The character of Christ upon the throne reveals the character of the God who set Him there.

It is often and justly said that, in our approach to God, we fail to get past preoccupation with our needs; we fail to reach communion with Him in His things. Perhaps however, it is our unreadiness to occupy Christ *fully* with *all* our needs that is the sticking-point. "I knew that thou wast a hard man" is the same attitude which in prayer also produces lack of confidence at the throne and prevents our being liberated from self-occupation. The sin in it is that it misrepresents the Saviour's character — a "merciful and faithful High Priest". He has done the work of faithfulness; the mercy remains for ever. And now the knowledge of His character becomes for us a basis for *boldness*, namely, for that willingness to approach entirely without earthly or external intermediation. Ventured here on the grounds of His sympathy, and in 10:19 on the grounds of His blood, it is the defining and habitual characteristic of people on the path of faith (10:35; 3:6). Self regard, and the failure to judge sin in ourselves, are the best way to lose it. Reliance on the intercession of "the saints" or on the sacraments, is an insult to the Saviour's character.

It was sweet of the writer to introduce the subject of the High Priesthood of Christ with what most immediately touches us — our weakness, but that was preparatory — in order to liberate our thoughts for better things. "Now [Christ] seeks to conduct our hearts to where He is, to His side of things in the bright scene of God's presence, so that we be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience receive the promises"*.

What, then, qualifies *our* High Priest particularly (we must remember the implicit comparison with the Jerusalem priesthood throughout) to bring us into that "bright scene"? The first ten verses of chapter 5, and chapter 7 set out more systematically the qualifications that reside in His Person; chapters 8 to the middle of 10 set out the right that is secured in His work. In all this the method is comparative — from the high priesthood of the sons of Aaron to the High Priesthood of the Son of God, from what is good to what is better, from what is earthly to what is heavenly.

The first ten verses of chapter 5 also have a backward reference, however (the chapter begins with a *for*). They explain the basis of the sympathy of our great High Priest. Let us now consider them.

These verses contrast a high priest whose function is defined by His having been *taken from amongst men* (5:1), with a High Priest who, though a Man, was called as Son of God (5:5-6). The fact that the first high priesthood was taken from among men indicates that it is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God*. A high priest, that is to say, gathers up and makes good the Godward relationship of men. And as a kind of commentary upon the state of mankind this relationship can be summed up in a single duty: the offering of gifts and sacrifices *for sins*.

*J. A. Trench, "The Priesthood of Christ", in *Truth for Believers*, Vol. II, p. 113.

Two qualifications are required of the priest who fulfils this function.

Firstly, sympathy (5:2). That which equips him to represent men is identity of experience with men. The writer accords this inward, subjective quality a greater place than it receives in the Old Testament instructions about priesthood. We may say that what was only latent under the Law has become patent in the day of Grace. The Old Testament does at least imply the existence of a basis for "sympathy" between priest and people in the fact that, on the day of Atonement, the high priest must first offer sacrifice for himself and his house (Leviticus 16:6). The common experience that united priest and people was the proneness to sin. But, as we shall see, the very thing that fitted them for the earthly service unfitted them for the heavenly (7:28).

The second qualification is appointment. *No one takes this honour unto himself* (5:4). This teaches us, in passing, the fundamental truth that, contrary to what many Christians believe, and to the way they act, *nothing* of what concerns our approach to God is left to our own arrangement; *everything* must be governed by His explicit word (cp. 8:5 below).

Christ is also "come an high priest" (9:11), and so, the writer implies, the two qualifications governing the Levitical high priesthood will be satisfied by Him also. In His case the writer reverses the order and considers "appointment" before "sympathy". Christ was not *taken from among men*, but called as Son of God (5:5-6). Chapter 7 will explain the critical importance of this fact, and there the link between Psalms 2:7 and 110:4 will emerge in the figure of Melchizedek. The cardinal point here is that the writer cites two explicit passages *in the Word of God* to establish our Lord's appointment as the heavenly High Priest.

But if He is called as Son, has He that "identity of experience" that would enable Him to act for us? We note well the significant change of argument at this point. The inspired writer does *not* point to *Christ's* sacrifice as the evidence of *His* sympathy, for "in Him was no sin". And this teaches us that while the basis of His High Priesthood is one completed sacrifice for sin, its *continuing* business is the bringing to glory of them that *are sanctified*. It is with them as saints on the path of faith (and not as oftentimes sinners) that He has an "identity of experience", obtained *in the days of His flesh*. This experience was no sham. For the One addressed as *Son* in Psalm 2:7 was so addressed in incarnation (*this day have I begotten thee*). In that nature, *Son though He was*, He learned what the relationship of obedience, of subordination, is. The insertion of the article shows this to be the meaning, and not "He learned to obey", as if previously disobedient. We might have considered His omniscience sufficient guarantee of His sympathy and competence to bring us to glory. The Godhead, if I may say so reverently, did not think so. It was considered necessary that the Son of God learn "from the inside", so to speak, what obedience on the path of faith means, since it is demanded of those whom He saves.

It has been justly remarked that the difference between His Sonship and our sonship clearly appears in the difference between this

verse and 12:7-9. The many sons are chastened *because* they are sons; He learns obedience *although* (in spite of the fact that) He is Son. The construction of the argument explodes the blasphemous opinion that "Sonship" *implies* subordination.

As an example of when He "learned obedience", Gethsemane is advanced (5:7). What greater trial to the path of faith could be conceived than one which demanded the abandonment of what all men hold dearest — life itself — and that to the judgment of God? *He was heard* — true; but only having first been forsaken, only on the other side of death. Now, however, He is *perfected*, that is, exalted to glory. A high priest still struggling along the path of faith could bring us no further than he himself had reached. But, perfected, Christ can author eternal, absolute salvation to them who *obey Him*.

What the writer has further to say about the High Priesthood of Christ demands a minute examination of Psalm 110:4 (5:10). This he will do in chapter 7. The Scriptures concerning Melchizedek contain, however, things *hard to be interpreted*, not in and of themselves, but in view of the readers' inability to comprehend; they had become *dull of hearing*. They had lost "skill" (5:13) in understanding the Word of God. Commentators state that the word translated "first principles", or "elements" (5:12) can also mean "ABC". The criticism, then seems to be not only that they had forgotten the content of *the beginning of the oracles of God* (i.e. the O.T. Scriptures), but that they had allowed the spiritual equipment to decay which would enable them to "figure it out". To use the writer's own metaphor, they had lost digestive capacity for "meat". It had decayed through disuse (5:14), and their ability to handle the *word of righteousness*, and to distinguish *good and evil* in the interpretation of it, was now minimal (cp. 2 Timothy 2:15). Ignorance of "good and evil" is in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 1:39; Isaiah 7:16) an attribute of children; and *milk* is children's food. The trouble was, these believers had been on the way a long time.

How able are we ourselves, when faced with a passage of Scripture, to discover its plain meaning? *Strong meat* is undoubtedly what the Scriptures teach concerning the cross and the glory of Christ (not the one or the other, but both in relation to each other) and His people's place with Him in these great matters. This is the spiritual guideline by which the writer interpreted Scripture, and he employed various practical guidelines to help him in this, as I have tried to show in going along: careful examination of the wording of the text, attention to context, interpretation of one Scripture by other related Scriptures, awareness of the possible significance of the silences of Scripture. We cannot hope for the divinely-given skill he showed, but are we aiming to follow him?

The writer, then, has been forced into his third "interruption". That this follows so hard on the second (3:2-4:12) underlines his deep concern that the doctrine of the High Priesthood of Christ be rightly understood.

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

EZRA: A BRIEF OUTLINE _____ GORDON KELL

(This article is an address recently given in Bradford)

The Background and Relevance of the book of Ezra.

Ezra and Nehemiah have a special relevance today. Centuries before their time, great movements from God had taken place. God had worked mightily with his ancient people, setting them up in their land, and ultimately (in the days of David and Solomon) a great display of God, the God of Israel, had reached its peak. God was known and served amongst His people, with a testimony regarding Himself directed to the surrounding nations. But His people had moved away; they had departed seriously from Him, in heart and in conduct. It all crumbled and fell away. In time God's city was broken down, the temple destroyed, and His people captive in a strange land, as the result of their disobedience and dishonouring ways. The nations that might have received their witness instead became means of rebuking them.

Much the same situation exists today. Christianity had a wonderful beginning. God acted in Christ, and the Spirit of God moved in the early Church. Those were days of real honour to God amongst the body of believers, real testimony to Him, real obedience to His will. In particular, obedience to His mind in assembly life, and the honouring of Christ in these areas of activity, marked those days. Broadly, amongst the people of God today, all this has been marred by disunity, disobedience, and inward and outward departure from ways pleasing to Him., as laid down in His word. The book of Ezra tells how a fraction of the people of God were able to leave behind the bonds of their captivity, *depart* from the false situation (abnormal to them as the true people of God) and *return* to things as they had been at the beginning. What they accomplished was only a shadow of what had been apparent at the start. Nevertheless they were pleasing God, and doing His will again. The book of Ezra therefore has much to tell us about doing His will today.

There is a lesson in every chapter of the book. The book will be surveyed, chapter by chapter, highlighting quite briefly what seem to be the main points.

Chapter 1. The Call. Note primarily that the revival began, not with

themselves, but with God. *God* moves, and desires that we should share in His moving. *The Call* was issued to His people, "Who is there among you" ready to do His will? It went to them all, young and old. It would cost them much to respond. Pleasing Him is never a soft option. The return, and the action to be done, re-building among the ruins, required choosing the will of God before all else. About fifty thousand of them, young and old, obeyed; a small minority within the whole body of God's people. The same Call is directed to us today. Which of us will heed it?

Chapter 2. The Return is described here. All the names of those who responded are recorded. God knew every one of them, and valued their faith. He was *with them*; the hand of the LORD was upon them. Such obedience is precious to Him.

Chapter 3. The Foundation. Their unity is stressed. "They gathered as one man to Jerusalem". "The Foundation" is a fair caption to this chapter. Their unity was founded on God and the desire to do His will. They built outwards from the centre. First things came first. The altar. on its bases, burnt offerings, then freewill offerings, the foundations of the temple. With us everything must start from appreciation of Christ, the One who gave Himself freely and willingly. Our gifts are secondary, but He is entitled to them; willing response is surely right. Note how their response was such an integrated one; and note also the phrase, "from 20 years old and upwards".

Chapter 4. The Adversary. A setback is seen here. The adversary is also at work, and progress is halted (for 15 years). It was nostalgia, perhaps, that allowed the adversary to get a foot in the door. "Things are not what they were" becomes a reason for loss of zeal. Occupation with our own interests "while the LORD'S house lies waste" saps energy, even though a good start has been made. The smallness of our activity provided we do the Lord's will, should never be a reason for inertia. Attacks on the work of the Lord are sure, and often they arise from a wrong spirit inside.

Chapter 5. The Intervention. God intervenes again. Haggai and Zechariah working together stir up the people, and the work resumes. Haggai, an older man, was one who remembered the former times. Zechariah appears to have been of a later generation (see Zechariah 1:1). Is it not good to see young and old together, each as a bearer of God's message, so much needed by His people in their lethargy; and is this not needed in our day?

Chapter 6. The Completion. Here we see the building completed. They had done what God had asked, regardless of criticism and deterrents; that, surely is of first importance; and they knew it. They shared in the joy of having done His will for them. The sound of that joy amongst them was heard outside too. The surrounding peoples took note of what God was doing. God had His proper place amongst them. Success

is measured by whether God is central and supreme in our hearts and in our activities. Christ is at the Centre, and the Spirit the Leader, in assembly life according to the will of God. Put any other person in that place, or have any other norm for conduct, and we follow our own pattern rather than His.

Chapter 7. The Prepared Servant. The pattern presented by Ezra himself, as God's servant, and as a model for ourselves, is more prominent in the final four chapters. The *prepared* servant is seen here. He was prepared and ready for all that he did for God; he was a **ready** scribe. Note particularly verse 10, and let us seek to follow this pattern. He had lived with God's word, breathing in the atmosphere of its contents. He *sought out* all that God had written. Furthermore, he *did* it; he put it into practice in his own life first. After that, and surely this is the right order, he was able to *teach* it. Thus, he was able to be the man that he was at this epoch of the O.T. story.

Chapter 8. The Faithful Servant. In this chapter we see the faith in God which was a principle in Ezra's life. Setting off from Babylon, with a band only about 2000 strong, Ezra felt ashamed to require the king's escort, but would rather prove God on the way. That kind of faith was characteristic of the man, underlying all else that ensued. Note also, that he was looking to God for "the right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance". He wished to be faithful in leading his family aright, and deploying his effects aright too.

Chapter 9. The Sorrowing Servant. Ezra shows a sensitivity to sin, especially sin amongst the people of God, which is greatly needed. The work of God was being diluted and vitiated; His people were mixed up with wrong things, wrong liaison with persons and influences contrary to the word of God. Ezra felt it deeply, as the prayer in this chapter, full of confession of this grave evil, shows. Putting such things right needs really godly men to do it, and Ezra shows these marks. Silence is his first reaction, then urgent prayer; then, and only then, a guarded and careful speaking of the truth in love. Such action won obedience, and a proper dealing with the issues. There was no hardline approach to the matter.

Chapter 10. The Fruitful Servant. Here we have the outcome. The fruitful servant sees the recovery, and has the full backing of the people of God. The unholy alliances were acknowledged, confessed and discontinued; and, for a time at least, they were holy people for their God, doing His will, and in the place where God would have them be.

RICH IN MERCY

F. W. BOYD

EPHESIANS 2

There is a wonderful aura of glory in chapter 1 of Ephesians which all who love our Lord value. We read concerning Christ, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth". Then we read of God's activity in "His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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". And as to the church we read, "(It) is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all, in all".

Turning to Ephesians chapter 2 however, so great is the contrast that we might think we were reading another book, perhaps by another author and dealing with another sphere. Well, reader, it is dealing with another subject and it *is* addressed to you, and I must add my name there also. We are shown to be so low that there is nothing for us but God and His grace.

Consider the two descriptions of our state. The first one deals with our state in reference to the world and the second one with what we might loosely call our religious condition. As to the first, we read, "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (2:2-3). You might say, "I was converted at a very tender age and this means very little to me". If this is the case you have everything to thank God for, in that you have been kept from much of the grossness of the world. Yet as to your original state it is applicable, "a child of wrath". How many of us have forgotten this?

Coming to the second description of our former condition we are to remember that we never were of Israel. "Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world". One asks, "Well, what does that matter? Where is the advantage?". The answer of the Holy Spirit through Paul is that it *does* profit. "Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). 'As aliens from the commonwealth of Israel we are of necessity outside the blessings of the covenants. As Gentiles we had no personal knowledge of God or of his Christ. Outside Israel on the one hand and part of the wicked world on the other, our case was absolutely hopeless. We were without hope and we must remember it.

I have not yet mentioned the first verse of the chapter but that

must be considered now. Its truth is terrible. "Dead in sins", no life for God at all, inert, helpless — dead. But God has acted. He has quickened. He has the power and the means to remedy the situation and also divine will to do it. If our case was hopeless, God has his resources. He is "rich in mercy". Moses heard God's voice, in Egypt, in the wilderness and amid the terrors of Sinai, but after the sin of Israel when they worshipped the golden calf he needed a fresh vision for his soul and his work. Then God declared Himself. He hid Moses in a cleft of rock in the vastness of the mountain and declared Himself. "The LORD" (Exodus 34:6). What a mighty word! It dwarfs the universe. "The LORD God, merciful and gracious". This was sufficient for Moses, but for us the Holy Spirit through Paul would reveal the greatness of God not just as merciful but as *rich in mercy*.

This flows from God's own nature which is love. Romans 5:8 tells us, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us". But in our chapter this love is *magnified*; it is spoken of as His *great* love. His great love brings God Himself into activity. He quickens, brings into life us who were dead in sins, raises us up together and makes us sit together with Christ in the heavenlies.

In the very midst of this there is a parenthesis and our attention is drawn to grace. "By grace ye are saved". This word, "grace", is repeated a third time in verse 8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith". Whence is this faith? Even our faith is the gift of God and God has the future as well as the present under His eye: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace and kindness toward us through Christ Jesus". In everything for God we are God's workmanship — His creation in Christ Jesus unto good works — and so pleasurable to God. God has before ordained them that we should walk in them.

Probably all have heard of John Newton, the wicked ex-captain of a slave ship. When writing to his friend he remarked that neither of them would ever have turned to God for salvation if it had been left to themselves. Both resisted God for months. Neither wanted to be saved. Whilst the flesh never wants God, blessed be God, He has His own plans and the power to implement them in Christ. By grace they are carried out in each one of us. The apostle John writes, "nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). Salvation is all of God. No wonder Newton could write, "Amazing grace . . . that saved a wretch like me". And no wonder Paul prays for "revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians 1:17).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings . . . in Christ."

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD COLIN CURRY

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”. **John 8:12.**

“The true light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man”. **John 1:9.**

The themes of *light*, *life*, and *love* are central to the substance of the fourth Gospel. Each of these concepts is something we know about on the natural plane; though to define what we mean by any one of them is difficult. They are matters known by experience rather than definition. These experiences, known at human level, are the means through which higher level truths are unfolded, particularly in the Gospel. The life, the light, and the love manifested in Christ have features which far exceed anything that is known on the earthly plane. Yet we are introduced to them, and are able to consider them, in the light of the limited earthly “models”. In the previous paper, for instance, we saw how our Lord used natural life (sustained by ordinary bread) as a basis for speaking of *eternal* life, which is both received and sustained by assimilation of Himself as the bread of life. Divine *love* also far surpasses the best human love, as more than one Scripture says; it belongs to “another country” altogether than the ordinary human realm. But it is because we know the lower-level meaning of the word “love” that we consider the “more excellent” love, and thus bow our spirits in response to the God who *is* love.

So also with *light*. Light is a physical phenomenon of a remarkable kind, to which we are sensitive (unless we are blind). But light in the natural realm also illustrates in a limited way what God *is*. He is all-holy and pure, intolerant of evil, exposing everything for what it is; yet also He is self-attesting and self-revealing, declaring Himself in all His excellent character, nature, and bounty; and doing so in an incontrovertible way. Here again the reality far transcends the figure.

These three themes (life, light and love) are so woven together in the Gospel that the wholeness of the message needs to be kept in mind. But we may also dwell on the separate utterances of our Lord, and the words “I am the light of the world” are surely charged with meaning on which we can focus.

The Uniqueness of ‘the Light’

The Lord Jesus is *the* Light of the world, and alongside this truth, all other sources of illumination fade into a small, insignificant role. Indeed, unless they reflect something of Himself, they may well be deceptive. He is the *true* Light, suggesting that He alone displays what is genuine, full and complete, and faithful to reality. It draws the contrast, not only with all that is false and misleading, but also with light from God in earlier times which was partial, faint and incomplete. This Light fills out and outshines all that went before. Light and darkness in the moral realm are fully apparent now that the true Light shines. Light in nature, appreciated in the physical sense, is a figure of

what completely outclasses it: the *true* Light that shines in Christ is an incomparable light, a light above the brightness of the sun indeed (Acts 26:13).

All other eminent persons, in the Bible and elsewhere, are small and minor alongside Him. Biblical persons show their quality in taking a subsidiary and lowly stance, and pointing only to Him. The prophets were *channels* for God's message; they could say "Thus saith the LORD". But the Lord Jesus is the very *substance* of God's word to men. His word is "*I am* the light of the world"; not only does He *bring* light from God, He *is* that light, in perfection and fulness. This is not the language of a mere prophet, nor of any other servant of God. He is the unique Light of men. John the Baptist readily took a very minor place beside Him. "He [John] was *not* that Light", but only a witness pointing to Him; so the record says. In answer to questions about himself, whether he was some great person, all he says is "I am *not*". The great "I am" to him was everything; he himself was nothing, no more than a voice, drawing attention away from himself to Christ. He clearly saw how right it was that "He must increase and I must decrease", and was content with that outcome. So it was with many of the great figures of Scripture. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day; he saw it and was glad. Christ's supremacy was his great hope and vision. So too with Isaiah, who saw Christ's glory and spoke of *Him* (see John 8:56; 12:41). All the prophets, indeed and all the Scriptures, bear witness to Him who stands alone in worth and in honour, who is the effulgence of God's glory, the Revealer of God to men.

The Scope of 'the Light'.

The Lord Jesus is the Light, not of a chosen nation only, but *of the world*. He is the Light *of men*. Especially associated with the period of His incarnation (and after His ascension too), there shines in Him a bright light which can never fade, a Light which is universal in its scope. He sheds His Light on every single man without exception. Reactions to Him are different, but it is unquestionable that that Light is there for all to take notice of. It covers the whole world, the whole of humankind; it has been shining over the centuries; it can never be cancelled or diminished.

This Light directs itself towards men in an utterly impartial way. God is no respecter of persons, and the Light of Christ shines equally on all. It discerns and abhors evil wherever it is. But also it does not distinguish between men in its positive activities. It has abundant grace, and freely offers life, for *all* who will receive it. There is no question of deserving it; the Light shines in the *darkness*; and this darkness is on every hand without it, and in every heart. Nevertheless the reactions to it are different. It is significant, no doubt, that the references to the Lord Jesus as Light fall in the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of John; that is, in the period of the public actions and discourses of our Lord. It appears first within the opening verses of the Gospel, and it forms the concluding solemn and general word from our Lord to all hearers, at the close of chapter 12. In between, it appears here and there

(in chapter 3, and it is prominent in chapters 8 and 9). There is much controversy in the chapters which cover His public words and works. The Light clashes with the darkness, though with some it penetrates their darkness. In the private words of the disciples however (chapters 13 to 17) the figure of Light is not referred to. True, His disciples received great illumination from His words on the eve of the Passover, but His activity as the Light of *men* is not stressed in the privacy of the place where all were on the one side in relation to Him.

The effects of 'the Light'

The assertion, 'I am the Light of the world' occurs in each of the two chapters 8 and 9, and there are actions as well as words from our Lord in these chapters which closely exhibit the effects of that Light. One of the functions of ordinary light is to bring clearly into view the object on which it falls. Light *exposes* things; they are searched and scrutinised in it. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Ephesians 5:13). The story of the adulteress, and the Lord's dealing with her accusers, shows this serious and searching nature of the Light of Christ as it falls upon men: they were quite ready to talk of another's sin, and had little sense of its gravity. They welcomed an opportunity to test Him with a difficult problem, with a view to accusing Him later. But how the story takes a new turn when they press Him further! How searching is *His* judgement of the matter! Yes, sin is sin, wherever it may be, and gross sin is awful. The sentence of the law is deserved; the condemnation of sin is right, but less patent sin is due for judgement too. Only sinless persons are fit to carry out the judgement of sinners. The Light is turned on *them*; and they move out of His presence convicted in their own consciences, but not more well-disposed towards Him. As for the woman, He alone was sinless and might have judged her, but He was here to save and not condemn. But He certainly does not condone sin, and makes that quite clear to her.

One effect of the shining of the Light then, is that the true state of men is made plain. "This is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil". The broad reaction to Christ has been to turn the back on Him, and to seek the cover of darkness. One of His most sad yet true statements was as follows: "Now [i.e. since He came amongst them] they have no cloke for their sin . . . If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:22, 24). Rejecting Christ is the crowning sin.

But the Light has other effects too. If refusing Christ is the sin of sins, receiving Him is the highest of blessings. What a picture is given in chapter 9, of the Light breaking in, of blind eyes being opened, of the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus being revealed to one single man! What a rebuke to the pretentious ignorance of unbelief, shown by His critics! Light, in the physical sense, not only exposes objects on which it falls, but originates from *sources*. The quality of the light depends on the kind of source from which it emanates. Sunlight, sodium light, candle-light, have their differences. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another . . . There is

one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another glory of the stars". Sources of light are known; indeed they can be distinguished and analysed, by the light they emit. How true this is in the higher sense too. Christ, the true Light, is not only Light directed towards men, He is also Light *from* God. He *reveals* God, and we know God by knowing Him.

The blind man received more than sight, though that was a marvellous gift in itself. None had ever heard of a case of congenital blindness being cured. Yet those sightless eyes began to see, and, furthermore, a far greater perception was soon dawning upon him. He progressed step by step in appreciation of the Healer of his blindness, and soon the bright Light of God which shone in the Person of Christ had entered thoroughly into his soul. How was it that this man received the Light when others were resisiting it, and what effects did this dawning revelation which had its source in God have upon him? In answer to these questions several things are apparent in the chapter.

First, Jesus Himself was at the centre of the action. He passed that way, and He intervened unasked. No aid for the human plight comes apart from His proximity to us, His descent into our area of need, and His initiative there for the glory of God. Secondly, the man was passive and submissive under the Voice of the Lord Jesus. He sensed His authority, heard Him unquestioningly, obeyed Him implicitly, and received his sight. "He went . . . and washed, and came seeing". Could anything be more direct and simple? How it differs from the manner of the self-styled knowledgeable ones, who had "agreed already" what would be their reaction to persons confessing Christ. Prejudice blinds to the Light, whilst open simplicity receives it. The blind man showed a direct, first-time, response to Jesus, and also he knew well his own plight and the impossibility of a cure by ordinary human resources. The leaders of the people, on the contrary, had a place to maintain, a position to assert, and felt themselves assailed by the Light. They hated the Light, and at the same time were quite blind to their own arrogance, sinfulness and prejudice. It has been said that if we do not use the light we lose it (John 12: 35, 36 seems to contain this thought). When the Light of Christ makes its impact, and yet is resisted, people become insensitive to it, and ultimately reject it totally. These leaders were at the far end of that process: but not so the blind man. He may not have heard of Jesus before. Yet in one day (as it seems) he heard and obeyed Him, received his sight, and began to understand how great a Person had revealed Himself to him.

What sort of a man did that Light now dawning within his soul make of him? First, he was a man with an outstanding real experience behind him, and still with him. Sight is indeed a real experience, which needs no proof to the person who has it. But what must the transition from blindness to sight be! It was so marvellous that he had every impulse to confess it, and to honour the One who did it. Should it be less so with those who have been brought out of the darkness into *God's* marvellous Light? Secondly, the man was unwavering in his simple confession of the truth. Out of his very experience came the ability to side openly with the Lord Jesus, and to speak the truth

concerning Him as far as he knew it. Next he was clear-sighted in an increasing way. Thinking clearly, starting from what he knew, he soon learnt more. This man called Jesus must at least be a prophet; then, God must be with Him, surely, to do an act of this kind. He marvels that they, the experts, cannot see it. It brings verbal abuse, excommunication too, but his Master soon joins him in his isolation. Again he hears His voice, and sees Him too now; he finds His support and approval, and receives and believes the fullest revelation of all. He becomes a worshipper of the Son of God, and a receiver of the full Light that shines in Him. May these effects, seen in this once-blind man, appear too within today's recipients of that Light.

The Light of life

All words are inadequate to describe the matchless brightness, and the fulness of content, of the Light that shines in Christ. A *great* and *glorious* Light it is indeed, *marvellous* Light; all about it is *excellent* beyond comparison. These are some of the Scriptural terms used about it. It is patent, undeniable, and inextinguishable. It is many-sided in its glories and its perfections, as befits a full revelation of God in all its comprehensiveness, in all its love and grace and splendour. It will be the Light of the eternal scene, when the former things have passed away. But the believer who follows Him today has the Light of life in a present sense. That great Beacon shines upon his life; it is his guide. The purpose and the point of life is found in Him. Following Him, being drawn and attached to Him, is his way of life. Beholding something of the glory of the Lord, taken up with His excellences in whom the glory of God now shines, those so occupied are able to manifest in their way of life some reflection of that Light. Believers show that they are 'in the Light' by its control over their manner of life, by the outshining of the Light which is such a treasure within their 'earthen vessels'. This is only possible because of the in-shining of that glory of Christ, into our hearts, and a sustained renewal of the sense of its magnificence day by day. As Paul shows in 2 Corinthians 4, *this* is what invigorates one; this preserves him from fainting; it keeps him alive and active despite many pressures upon him; it makes him an obedient and ardent representative of the Light, until at last he arrives where that Light is appreciated "face to face".

FELLOW-WORKERS WITH PAUL ————— T. D. SPICER

8. EPAPHRODITUS

(The last article in this occasional series appeared in November, 1980)

Information about the apostle Paul during his captivity in Rome and the opportunities he had there for spreading the Gospel, is supplied by the epistle to the Philippians. This letter which Paul wrote at this time to Philippi is unique. No other assembly was more dear to him; none so wholeheartedly received his approval. He calls this assembly "his joy and crown". The circumstances of his first converts

there must have left an indelible impression on his memory -- the gaol, the earthquake, the loosening of chains and a suicidal gaoler. The reference to his subsequent visits to the city are brief (Acts 20: 3, 6), but the letters which we have show that although experiencing much hardship and suffering they had supplied the apostle's wants both while he was in Thessalonica and in Corinth (Philippians 4: 16 and 2 Corinthians 11: 9). The occasion which brought Epaphroditus to Rome and provoked the writing of this Epistle was yet another act of generosity. The Philippian believers had learnt that Paul was in prison and in need, and desired, not only to send a gift, but a representative who would best convey their sympathy and concern. They chose Epaphroditus.

To help us estimate the character of this particular companion of the apostle we have in chapter 2 of the Epistle some very full details. Paul is sending back Epaphroditus, of whom he gives this description, "my brother, and companion of labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants" (verse 25). Then in the following three verses he adds the reason why he is sending him. Further interesting information is supplied in the concluding words of the passage where, after urging that Epaphroditus ought to be received "with all gladness", he gives an additional reason why he ought to be held in high honour, "because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (verse 30). The whole reference is an invitation for us to consider what Epaphroditus was to the apostle and to the Philippians; of how he became the bond of a closer union between Paul and the believers in Macedonia.

The Messenger

At the outset, Epaphroditus is the messenger from the assembly, willing and zealous, utterly trustworthy, for he is above all the representative of their liberality. His generous character corresponds to the errand on which he was sent. His arrival in Rome must have revived old memories of visits to Philippi for the apostle, and re-kindled a warm affection as a result of their solicitude. Now, Epaphroditus had been dangerously ill, causing much anxiety to Paul, and the news of his illness had reached the Philippians, giving them also some distress. This feeling on their part was a sure indication of their love and esteem, but the point is that Epaphroditus was himself unsettled when he heard of this feeling among the Philippians; he longed after them all and was full of heaviness, because they heard that he had been sick.

This anxiety of the assembly came also to Paul's attention and, great as was his own loss in seeing his friend leave Rome, he was anxious that he should return so that when the Philippians "saw him again they might rejoice", and, as he generously adds, he as a result would be "the less sorrowful". It would be difficult to find anywhere such an interchange of affectionate feeling. It is a most forcible illustration of the truth that the "whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth . . . maketh

increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

The origin of this serious illness is made known; the risk had been incurred in the cause of the Gospel. "*For the work of Christ* he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life". This is a strong expression and means that, for the sake of his Lord, he readily exposed himself to danger and even death in ministering to Paul. What a commentary this expression is of the service and spirit of Epaphroditus.

The Fellow Soldier

Writing to the assembly the apostle speaks of his friend confidently and we find him using the most generous expressions. Epaphroditus is his "brother", his "companion in labour", his "fellow soldier". The description is on an ascending scale. The word "brother" identifies those born of the same parents, but we also use it to express different relationships. When Paul uses the term he is in the realm of grace where those who are "born again" are brothers in Christ. It is an expression which tells of sympathy, love and kinship. These two men were at home with one another and shared the intimate liberty of those who belong to the same family.

Fellowship between "brothers in Christ" will often lead to companionship in service. Epaphroditus was not afraid of hard work. He knew that the work of the gospel was not always attractive and that all too often it called for willing hands to attend to commonplace tasks. But he was more than a worker, he was a "fellow-worker" and this implies the grace to work with others. Sadly, not all workers can do this; some cannot serve under another, or even share the yoke. Those who can and do work together discover one of the greatest joys which "fellow-workers" can have; the realisation that they are also "labourers together with Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Lastly in this triad of expression these two servants of Christ were "fellow soldiers", sharing the hardships, dangers, sufferings and setbacks of the Christian warfare.

So in our study of this man of God we discover many lessons. We learn how Christian feeling may be strengthened and Christian hearts united through individual exertion. This is something within the power and ability of us all, if we use our opportunities aright, by putting ourselves in ready sympathy with those around us and with all whom we can help.

SOME BETTER THING _____ T. BALDERSTON

6. PRESSING ON TO PERFECTION: HEBREWS 6

The first verse of chapter six does not draw the obvious conclusion from the closing verses of chapter five. There it seemed as though the spiritual incompetence of his readers would force the writer to abandon, or to postpone, his exposition of the "Melchisedec priesthood". But instead, their state prompts him to press on.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection (6:1). The only means of stabilising those who, though maybe faltering, nevertheless held fast to the confession of Christ was *progress*. Perfection speaks of “what belongs to full growth” (N.Tr. of J.N.D.). As the use of the word in this epistle shows (5:9; 12:2), it also speaks of “Christ in glory”. “Full growth” is the knowledge of Christ *there* and, from that vantage point, the apprehension of His work upon the cross. Chapters nine and ten of this epistle follow chapters seven and eight (cp. Philippians 3: 12-15).

Can apathy be observed today? Or backsliding? The inspired writer’s antidote in this Scripture is not “milk” but “strong meat”. “Milk” is essential, at the right time and for the right period. But not for longer than that period. A perpetual diet of so-called “simple truth” is spiritually stunting. It produces a generation of believers unable to distinguish good and evil, because their senses have never been exercised to do so, who know nothing of the heavenly Priesthood, the heavenly access, the heavenly calling, the path of faith to the better country, or the place outside the camp. To take a concrete case: young people’s rallies, weekends, etc. provide excellent opportunities for teaching *if they are taken*. If their (unintended) function became in fact the preventing of the weaning of young people from “milk”, they would become a bad thing. On the other hand, however, those who seek to provide the “strong meat” also have responsibility to see how they serve it. This inspired writer carefully applied his teaching to the immediate and pressing needs of his readers. His was “meat in due season” (Matthew 24: 25) indeed. Those who teach must be alive to the spiritual needs and to the spiritual and material environment of those whom they seek to instruct, if, when they teach, they are not to find themselves “beating the air” (1 Corinthians 9:19-26).

What was it then that these believers had to “leave behind” (6: 1)? The A.V. calls it “the principles of the doctrine of Christ”; more literally it is “the word [mg. “discourse”] of the beginning of the Christ” (N.Tr.). What this comprises is outlined in the six points that follow *not laying again the foundation*. These are: (i) *repentance from dead works*, (ii) *faith toward God*, (iii) *the doctrine of baptisms* [or, *instruction about washings*], (iv) *laying on of hands*, (v) *resurrection of the dead*, and (vi) *eternal judgement*. The important thing to notice is that while these points are termed “the word of the beginning of the Christ”, none of them is actually about Christ Himself. That is to say, they are certainly not a summary of the “foundation truths” in *our* sense of that phrase. Rather, the epistle *goes on*, in chapters 9 and 10, to speak of the work of Christ. All of them are, it seems, teachings that belonged to that borderland of belief between Judaism and the “faith” of the early church in Jerusalem. And so, for those “Christians” who prized and wished to foster the links with Judaism, these would be the beliefs that received disproportionate emphasis. Most of these six points remain cardinal truths of Christianity — all in fact, except maybe (iii) and (iv). Some of them gain a new and altered significance — for example, resurrection and faith. The last becomes more terrible (see 12:25-29). These things being so, the readers are not

urged to reject or renounce them: However, taken together as representative of a system, the readers are urged to leave them behind. For they were an obstacle to the apprehension of the better thing. As a system, they belong to "the beginning of the Christ", that is, to the time before the cross.

This was a unique historical case, but its present-day counterpart might be the building out of the Christian requirement to "love one's neighbour", and to "do good unto all men" (vital practical components of the faith we profess) into a system of *political Christianity* whose main function is to enhance the standing of "the Church" (so-called) in the eyes of the decent, the moral, but the infidel world around. Another example would be exaggerated and erroneous emphasis on the "gifts of the Spirit" in charismatic circles, to satisfy the demand for proofs and for experiences made by a world which basically rejects the authority of the word of God.

The writer's exhortation has a more serious side that might appear at first sight. It is not simply a question of a "slightly better" *versus* a "slightly inferior" form of Christianity. The attraction of these six points was precisely their *like-ness* to Judaism. Somebody who remained on these points, and in effect acknowledged them to be the foundation of his/her faith was in danger of reaching the point where the public profession of Christ would itself seem secondary, dispensable. The nearer one stood to Judaism, the greater the danger of apostasy from Christ. Or, to take verses 4-6 a slightly different way, some readers might have been arguing that it was necessary to stand by these "six points" in order to be able to attract back to the Church some who had already apostatised.

But apostasy is irrevocable. *It is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance* (6:4-6).

Notice what is said about these apostates. They had been *enlightened*. They had stood where the light was: In an intellectual sense they were fully cognisant of the central truths of the Christian faith. They had *tasted of the heavenly gift*. In entering the company where Christ's name was exalted they had touched heavenly things; for in identifying themselves with the One this world crucified they had certainly not been identified with what was earthly. They *were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*. This epistle does not speak of the indwelling or the sealing by the Holy Spirit, It does here explicitly state however that those who, even in an outward way only, profess the name of Christ have a share in that exalted testimony to Christ in glory which the Holy Spirit bears upon earth. Is this why infidel clergy can sometimes preach a good sermon? When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the apostles, they lied "to the Holy Ghost" (Acts 5:3), not as indwelling themselves, but as characterising the House of God. This is the sense (much neglected in evangelical Christendom) of "partaking" here. This is why the corrupting of the "great house" in 2 Timothy 2: 20ff. is so serious a matter. They had *tasted the good word of God* — and rejected "him that speaketh from heaven" (12:25). And they had *tasted the powers of the world to come* — as had Judas Iscariot.

That is what the section about apostasy does say. We must carefully delimit what it does not say. Apostasy must be distinguished from backsliding, in the sense of simple loss of interest, non-attendance at the meetings, etc. Backsliding was a problem common to *all* readers (10; 25, 12: 12) and was why the epistle was written. Apostasy is the calm, premeditated denial of Christ by one in full possession of the facts concerning Him (i.e. not a denial, as Peter's was, extracted under duress — distressing as that would be). 2 Timothy 2: 11-13 is most helpful on this point. Once upon a time those who now apostatised had taken sides with Christ (ostensibly) against the world that rejected Him. Now, in a deliberate action, they laid hold once again of the world's opinion of Him. They *crucified to themselves* once more One whom they had confessed in the height of His person as *Son of God*. Their action must have been a public one, and therefore it seemed so much the more to justify the world in its attitude to Christ. They *put him to an open shame* (6:6).

I do not think these verses should ever be used to inhibit anyone from praying ceaselessly on behalf of a dear one who has "fallen away". Nevertheless, they will be valuable to us when we come up against the inexplicable and soul-disturbing experience of apostasy in a friend. However inexplicable, the Scripture said it could happen. And if conversion is frequent today, so is apostasy.

But those who are really Christ's in the simple sincerity of their hearts *cannot* apostatise. God Himself is the guarantee of their salvation and His word proves it. So the rest of the chapter goes on to show. The writer is *persuaded* (6: 9) that his readers do not belong to that sorry class of people. In case he has frightened them, he calls them *beloved* (here only in the epistle). In case they doubt God's favour, for they too have been faithless, he reminds them of God's faithfulness (6: 10). Marks were seen in the apostates of apostasy; now marks have been seen in them of their true belief — *things that accompany salvation*. *Love . . . toward His name*, expressed in continuing service, service that cost something (*work and labour*), *to the saints*, not out of natural affection, but because they were *saints*, because they had the name of God upon them. Now the writer urges them to "press on to perfection" (6: 1, R.V.), in the assurance that they deal with a faithful God. To the clear expressions of *love* he wants them to add clearer expressions of *faith* (6: 12) and *hope* (6: 18). To this end he advances, no longer the warnings (as in 3: 7ff.), but the promises unalterably contained in the Scripture, as an "absolute authority on which their faith can rest" (Hamilton Smith).

Abraham had waited patiently for a son, and when he got him he had to be prepared to sacrifice the selfsame son on whom all the promises depended. After all these tests came the promise quoted here (Genesis 22: 17 = Hebrews 6: 14). God knew the hardness of the test and was willing to put Himself even on oath lest after all His dear servant's faith fail. God on oath to His creature! What condescension! What *strong encouragement* (6:18 N.Tr.) to the readers too who are being urged to exercise a like faith in One on whom all the promises of

God depend and whose continued absence causes them increasing perplexity (see 10:37). Their *faith and patience* (6:12), and not their natural descent here, make them the legitimate "inheritors" of the promise to Abraham. And it is interesting to note that in 6:14 the Genesis quotation has been amended in its last words by the substitution of "thee" for "thy seed". This is not accidental. Among other possible reasons, it indicates that what the inspired writer had in mind was the hope that Abraham had personally — and this, as impeccably deduced in 11:8-16, was for *a better country, that is, an heavenly*, whereas the hope of "his seed", as such, lay in the land. For Abraham, and for us, that hope reaches upwards, *as an anchor*, into heaven, and there it lays hold of a better pledge — *Jesus* (emphatically positioned to show He is there as the One who has identified Himself with us and us with Himself) as *Forerunner* within the veil. The absence of Christ from this world, so far from being an argument against our faith, is the guarantee of its true fulfilment. *Here we have no continuing city*. Do we treasure the fact of Christ's absence from the world as much as we treasure the fact of His presence with us by the Spirit? According to this Scripture, we ought to.

Jesus is the Forerunner. We are the after-runners, and we have to "run with patience . . . looking unto Jesus, the author *and perfecter* of . . . faith" (12:2 R.V.). Where Jesus is, *that* is perfection.

THE SPIRITUAL THERMOMETER

It is not by the delight I have in surveying the truth that I prove my faith, but in the commonest things here. If Christ be the light and object to faith, then in the most minute details down here the power of Christ will be manifested. The Lord Himself comes down from the glory on the mount (Matt. xvi), and forthwith with perfect ease and reliance on God pays the taxes, as I may say familiarly . . .

If I am fretful or nervous, or anxious about things here, it is evident that I have not had as much of Christ as I thought when I traversed with delight the course of His counsels. I must test my acquisitions (see Rom. v.1-5) by the trials or tribulation here. . . . I discover by my inability to meet an imposition or a vexation in the spirit of Christ, my lack of Christ to that extent. And hence everyone has some known trial by which they can test their spiritual state. Nay it is a kind of *thermometer* . . . The more the eye sees, the more will the heart and the conscience be subjected to testing to establish the reality of our abiding in Christ, and to keep us clear of the intrusion of the flesh.

J.B.S., *Letters on Subjects of Interest* [1873]

SOME BETTER THING _____ T. BALDERSTON

7. THE PRIEST FOR EVER, HEBREWS 7

With chapter 7, the pace of the exposition quickens. 6:20 has brought us back to the “priest after the order of Melchisedek” whom we last reached at 5:10. Now at length it is time to “press on to perfection”. A high plateau of doctrinal exposition now follows which will last till the middle of chapter 10. Not only the doctrine, but also the mode of its presentation deserves close attention. Chapter 7 (perhaps, strictly, the first 25 verses) is an exposition of the single text — Psalm 110:4. It is most instructive to observe the force, the rigour, and the relevance to his readers’ needs with which the inspired writer expounds it. At a casual glance, chapter 7 is baffling. But a little patience uncovers an essentially simple argument, with an awe-inspiring climax.

Psalm 110:4 says, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”. No phrase of this sentence is left unexpounded by the end of chapter 7, but the most significance is found in the phrase, “for ever”. If we keep this in mind, we shall not lose the thread of the argument. Verses 1-3 form one long continuous sentence (a fact obscured by modern translations) whose principal clause is the first three words of verse 1 and the last four words of verse 3: *For this Melchisedec . . . abideth a priest continually*. In verse 8 we read “. . . of whom it is witnessed that he liveth”; in verse 16, “*who is made . . . after the power of an endless life*”. In verse 17, Psalm 110:4 is itself quoted in confirmation, and in verse 24 we read, “*But [he] because he continueth ever . . .*”. Finally, the last words of the chapter are “. . . a Son, perfected for ever”. The significance of the phrase, “for ever”, is found chiefly to be that it shows our Lord’s Priesthood to be carried on in the eternal life of the Son of God.

It is now time to follow more closely the argument of the chapter.

In commenting on 5:11-14, I listed some of the simple rules used by the writer in interpreting Scripture. Among these was the interpretation of one Scripture by other related Scriptures. At the start of chapter 7 we find this principle again exemplified. To begin his exposition of Psalm 110:4, the writer turns to the only other passage of Scripture where Melchizedek appears — to Genesis 14:17-20. He does not turn to the opinions of contemporaries, to uninspired history, or anything else! This side-study, so to speak, occupies the first ten

verses of our chapter. From verse 11 to verse 25 he returns to a direct examination of Psalm 110:4 itself.

When the writer read Genesis 14:17-20 for light on the priesthood of Melchizedek, he classified the material that he found there in a threefold manner, and we must follow his method carefully if we are to understand him. (i) He found certain things said there to which he himself wished to draw attention. (ii) He found other things said there upon which he did not wish to dwell. (iii) He found certain things *not* said about Melchizedek, and he found the silence significant.

Let us proceed sequentially through 7:1-10, bearing this threefold classification in mind.

The first thing that the inspired writer read in Genesis 14 was that Melchizedek was *king of Salem, priest of the most high God* (Genesis 14:18 = Hebrews 7:1). Melchizedek was king and priest. This spoke to the writer immediately of Christ, and particularly, it reminded him of the way Christ is spoken of in Psalm 110, where in general it is as King that He is seen, except in verse 4, where it is as Priest. Thus the two Scripture passages about Melchizedek complement each other exactly. This singular applicability to Christ was confirmed to the writer when he reflected upon the meaning of the names. Melchizedek means, *king of righteousness*, and Salem (Jerusalem, Psalm 76:2) which he governed means "peace", so that he is also *king of peace* (7:2).

The writer, then, is led by the Holy Spirit to find in Melchizedek a type of Christ as "enthroned Priest-King". The many commentators who dwell on this fact, however, fail to notice that it is an unbalanced typology that the writer derives. The Priesthood dominates the foreground, whereas the Kingship recedes into the background. Apart from the significance of the Names (drawn out to heighten the typological applicability) the writer has nothing to say about the Kingship, but the Priesthood occupies several more chapters. *This parallels exactly his treatment of Psalm 110*, where only verses 1 and 4 are commented on. The other unremarked verses all clearly deal with our Lord's Kingship. What the writer does not comment on is as significant as what he does comment on. It is not just that he happened to be writing a treatise on "Priesthood", and that he could have chosen, had he wished, to make good the deficiency by a complementary treatise on "Kingship". In the critical situation amongst his readers that faced him, it was the Lord's Priesthood that mattered, not His Kingship. The reason is not far to seek. The writer's focus is upon *this present time*. It is determined for the whole epistle by Psalm 110:1 — "Sit thou at my right hand *until . . .*". The temporal setting of Psalm 2 — a time when "the heathen" still "rage" — confirms this. When the writer came to expound Psalm 8 in chapter 2, he carefully qualified the degree to which it is *presently* applicable. "Now we see not yet all things put under his feet" (2:8). It is remarkable, then, that all the verses of Psalm 110, except those quoted in this epistle, have a clear *future* reference. The inference is obvious. The true and manifest exercise of His Kingship is still to come.

Whereas "righteousness and peace" are indeed consequences of the gospel (Romans 5:1), the obvious frame of reference of the Genesis passage is that future administration when the fruits of His death shall be manifestly seen, when, "a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isaiah 32:1), and when, the government being upon His shoulder, He shall be called, "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). In that day He whose name is the Branch shall be King and Priest upon His throne (Zechariah 6:12-13); and righteousness and peace shall have kissed each other (Psalm 85:10). But about that time to come upon earth, this writer has nothing to say. In His present relationships with His people Christ is presented as High Priest and Apostle (3:1), not as High Priest and King.

With this silence about kingship may be connected another feature of the Genesis passage upon which the writer offers no comment: the bread and wine with which the historical Melchizedek nourished Abraham when the latter returned from the slaughter of the kings. Subsequent commentators have not lacked fertility in relating this e.g. to a priestly function of Christ in the eucharist; the inspired writer is not interested. He uses the priesthood of Melchizedek to explain what the Lord's Priesthood *is*, not to explain what it *does*. For the latter, he turns to the priesthood of Aaron. Read in the light of Scriptures such as Psalm 132:15-16, Isaiah 55:1-3, Hosea 2:21-22, etc., a typical reference in the bread and wine to the beneficent reign of the true Priest-King on Mount Zion is hardly to be doubted, *but that is not at all the subject here*. The whole teaching of the writer about the Priesthood of Christ has been summed up in the sentence that, at this present time, it is after the *order* of Melchizedek, but after the *pattern* of Aaron.

One further feature of the Genesis narrative belonging to class (i) — the class to which the writer wished to draw attention — remains: the blessing and the tithing. This is discussed in detail in 7:4-10 below, so I pass over it for the moment. The features coming under class (ii) have been considered. Arguably the most important feature of the Genesis passage comes under class (iii): the significance of what the passage does *not* say. Melchizedek is presented in Genesis 14 as *without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life* (7:3). It should go without saying that of course the historical Melchizedek must have had parents, been born, and died. All interest focusses on how Scripture presents him. It is a lesson in how to read Scripture. Very many read it as a kind of quarry of information which, when hewn, they rearrange how they will. Such readers would not be able to sympathise with the significance the writer attached to information that is *not* there. It is up to us however, to read Scripture carefully, not just for information, but for the way the Holy Spirit has chosen to present it, not atomistically, but in its totality. This writer noticed that, in a book in which the parentage of everybody who matters is scrupulously recorded (documentation would fill this page), in which "and he died" closes the record of (almost) every life, Melchizedek, alone of all them that worship God, flits on and off the stage, unaccounted for. By the Holy Spirit he must have read Genesis very carefully to notice this! What led the Spirit who

indited Genesis to make this omission? We can pass by various points others have adduced (e.g. that M. was a gentile) because the same Spirit who indited Hebrews tells us. The omission causes Melchizedek to appear as a priest *who abides continually* [or, *uninterruptedly*], and this confirms, as well as interprets, the "for ever" of Psalm 110:4. But it is the further significance of this that matters. In the dim record of a priest who is also a king, unqualified by human descent, without death or failure to interrupt his activity, we find a foreshadowing of the *Son of God* (7:3). We note in passing that it is the quality of *eternity* which leads to this conclusion. Do some deny that Scripture speaks of the eternal Sonship even of the One found in Manhood?

Psalm 110:4, then, confirmed by Genesis 14:18-20 leads, in the light of Christ having come, to Psalm 2:7. Now we begin to see the connection made in Hebrews 5:5-6. Having reached this climax the writer's restrained prose breaks into exclamation.

Consider how great this man was (7:4)! A further feature of the Genesis account confirms this greatness to him. In the relationship between Melchizedek and Abraham, the relationship between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Aaron is also foreshadowed. Those whose right to Priesthood consisted *only* in their genealogy, as specified in a "carnal commandment" (7:16), paid, in the person of their ancestor Abraham, tithes to the Priest who had no genealogy, and he for his part imparts a blessing on them. The priesthood with genealogy is seen to be subordinate to the priesthood without genealogy, the priesthood of dying men subordinate to the priesthood of Him *who lives* (7:4-10).

Before this argument is dismissed as artificial, it should be considered carefully. It is quite appropriate to argue that the relationship of the Levitical priesthood to that of Melchizedek was reflected in the relationship of subordination accepted by their ancestor, because, after all, it was on descent, and only descent, that the legitimacy of their priesthood depended anyway. *Family* is the most basic of earthly relationships; the fact that the Levitical priesthood depended on family defined the sphere of their priesthood as earthly. Heaven however is the proper sphere of the Son of God, and the dependence of His Priesthood on His Sonship defines it as heavenly. Those who come under it are going to be taken out of the world for which they were created and placed before the throne of God. The rest of the chapter is designed to lead to this vital conclusion.

The writer now turns to Psalm 110:4 itself. He develops his argument in five stages. (1) In the first stage (7:11-14) he deduces the imperfection and supersession of the Levitical priesthood from the fact that the Melchizedek priesthood was instituted *subsequently* and in such a way as to be *incompatible* with the earlier priesthood. (2) In 7:15-19 he employs the words "for ever", to pinpoint directly the nature of the imperfection of the old priesthood and the superiority of the new: the relationship of Law is to be replaced by a relationship of Life. (3) In 7:20-24 the writer turns aside to consider the particular

anxiety of his readers, being of the "House of Israel". How could they be sure that they were truly released from the covenant obligations which bound them to the Sinai-system? (4) In 7:23-25 he deduces from the dependence of the Levitical system on genealogy its subjection to *death*. But Christ's *abiding for ever* implies His ability to save His people absolutely, and according to eternity. (5) The whole argument is summed up in 7:26-28, in a manner going beyond the Psalm itself. *Such a high priest became us.*

(1) Firstly the writer makes a deduction from the fact that Psalm 110 was written after the institution of the Levitical priesthood (. . . *what further need* — 7:11). That a *different* (better than, *another*) priest should arise, after a different order, and not meeting the genealogical prescriptions of the Sinai/Levitical system, implies that that system must be imperfect. This deduction has a far-reaching implication. The Law was unitary. If Christ's Priesthood was incompatible with one component of it, it was incompatible with all of it. Those who view the Law as a set of loosely related commandments, distinguishing the "ceremonial" from the "moral" aspects, or who believe that it is its principles that count, and not its details, will find it hard to follow the writer's reasoning here. The whole argument hangs on our Lord's arising out of Judah and not Levi — a triviality, we might think. This understanding of the Law as a totality, bound together in the covenant that placed the people under contractual obligation to God, is critical to the epistle. The change of priesthood implied a change of the entire law (7:12).

The incompatibility is between the earthly and the heavenly. Our Lord's lack of genealogy unfitted Him for the earthly service (8:4), and their dependence on genealogy unfitted them for the heavenly.

(2) *And it is yet more evident* (7:15). The inferiority and obsolescence of the Levitical order is now shown, not by inference, but directly. The essence of the conditions by which the Levitical priesthood functioned was a *law of carnal commandment* — a law which regulated the transmission of the priesthood from one to another purely on the basis of an outward relationship of flesh and blood. But the essence of the conditions by which the Lord's Melchizedek priesthood functions is inward; it is the *power of an endless* [strictly, an *indestructible*] *life* (7:16). This is the intrinsic life of the Son of God. The Psalm itself implies it: "Thou art a priest *for ever*" (7:17).

This has a wider implication. The last clause of verse 12 should read, . . . *a change of law*. It is not merely that a new regulation, a new Law, replaces the old Law, but that the relationship of *law*, as such, is replaced by a relationship of *life*. This affects the entire system of approach. *Carnal commandment* reminds us that the Law demanded, but furnished the flesh with no power to comply (7:18). But now, *commandment* is replaced by *hope*, distance by *nearness* to God, and the *weakness* of the old covenant by the power released through the institution of the better covenant (7:18, 19, 22).

(3) Up to this point the argument has been constructed in the abstract terms of the comparison of two "systems". 7:19 for the first time makes it personal and specific to the readers: "Whereby we draw nigh unto God". When applied to them personally, the argument raised a difficulty. The "mount that might be touched", with its blackness and darkness, was no abstraction as far as the readers were concerned. In that they belonged to Israel they were obligated to that system, not just in their imaginations, but according to the word of God itself. *The man that despised Moses' Law died at the mouth of two or three witnesses* (10:28). It was all very well for the writer to speak of the new relationship of Life, but how were *the readers* to be transferred from Law to Life? The writer needs to assure them that God Himself has released them from their unfulfilled obligations under the old covenant. The very verse being expounded itself provides that assurance. *The Lord hath sworn and will not repent*. This oath is the measure of God's guarantee that in the appointment of Jesus as High Priest He really has done with *everything* pertaining to the old covenant; that therefore He would henceforth be dealing with His people (8:8) according to a better covenant, itself corresponding to the relationship of Life, and extinguishing the first. The matter is more fully explained in chapter 8.

(4) One last, conclusive deduction remains to be made from the comparison between the priests with, and the Priest without, genealogy (7:23-25). Those whose priesthood depends on genealogy show *by that fact* that they are subject to death. Priests can bring people no further than their own priesthood's validity reaches; they could bring the people no further than the grave. *But he, because of his abiding for ever, hath the priesthood untransferable* (Kelly). "His priesthood has the stamp of eternity upon it" (J.N.D.). He therefore, and He alone, *is able* to lead His people beyond death, *to save them*, not partially, not outwardly, not for this world only but, *to the uttermost*, to the presence of God, and eternity, *seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them*. As long as He abides in the Sanctuary, so long is He able to bring and keep His people there.

(5) 7:26-28 brings matters to a head, going in the process somewhat beyond the Psalm. We have been favoured with a heavenly, eternal High Priest who *is* Son of God. *Such an high priest became us*. Many interpret this to mean, He became us in our need, but they miss the point. Were this the meaning, the verses would surely have continued, "who was made perfect through sufferings" (cp. 4:15), or at least, "who can sympathise with our weakness" (cp. 4:15). This is the kind of High Priest who suits our *need*. But this is not the point any more. The High Priest who "becomes us" here is *holy* (not, here, in position, but intrinsically, in the sweetness of his character), *harmless, undefiled* (also in His character), *separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens* (in His present position). Why? Because we are to be made like that also. So high, so very high was the thought of God concerning us that only *such an high priest* could bring us

there to the place and the character marked out for us. And here (7:27) we find the point made in 5:2-3 applied by way of contrast rather than comparison. The Law appointed priests who admirably "became" the people they served — they had infirmity. At that point (5:7-8) a sort of parallel was drawn with the Lord's sympathy. But that had to do with our need. *There* He made Himself as we are, without the sin. *Here* we learn that He did it to make us as He is, and where He is; He gives us His character and His position, by the work He completed once for all time, though not, of course, that divine nature in whose power He does it.

It was when we read of what "became God" that we read of His being "made perfect through sufferings". When we read of what "becomes us" we read of His being made "higher than the heavens". It became *God* that He humbled; it became *us* that He be exalted. His Manhood became God; His Sonship became us — who is sufficient for these things? We cannot but feel our utter unworthiness of them. Only God in His sovereignty could have thought them.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE _____ JOHN BARNES

2 Timothy 4:7

Like his divine Master, Paul did not exhort the saints to do what he was not, himself, prepared to do. On one occasion the Lord Jesus said, "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart." He was clearly referring, not to His words alone but to what He was in Himself. The Lord Jesus seems only rarely to mention His own moral qualities. He did not need to; they were there to be seen. However, in Matthew 11 for example, He does refer to His meekness and lowliness. The Lord Jesus lived such a life and He was fully what He claimed to be. In their measure Paul and the other apostles took on this feature of the Lord.

In this very epistle (2 Timothy 1:8) he exhorts Timothy, "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord". He adds, almost immediately (v. 12), "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed". What power there is in an exhortation like that from such a servant of the Lord! A question was asked in a local Bible reading "What is exhortation?" A brother suggested, "Is it not like saying to one's brethren, 'Go on?' " Another brother added, "Would it not be better put, 'Come on'? You ask others to come and enjoy what you are in the good of." Paul's exhortations are of that kind. He says to us, "Come and get into this; I am in it and it is good."

In 2:3 he advises Timothy, "Endure hardness . . ." Then he points out (2:9), "I suffer trouble . . . even unto bonds", and, in verse 10, "I endure all things". He presses on his friend, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned", and adds, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them". His own example was always to the fore.

In 2 Timothy 4:7 three things are brought together in this one verse which illustrate this truth in Paul's case. He urges Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith". As he was writing these words Paul

was not sitting comfortably in some luxurious room in a king's palace, dressed in soft clothing and enjoying the easy life. He was enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Paul knew more of king's dungeons, dark, damp and vermin-infested, than of their airy, well-appointed apartments; more of thirst and hunger than of rich wines and nourishing food; more of nakedness than of soft clothing (cf 2 Corinthians 11). So, near the end of his hard campaign, he could write to his young friend with absolute truth: "I have fought the good fight." His exhortation to Timothy to fight was illuminated by his own rugged example.

He writes to the Corinthians about the role of the athlete. With this illustration in mind he urged them to consider the need of energy and endurance in the christian race. "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Corinthians 9:24). Paul does not write these encouragements as would a mere indolent onlooker urging a team of perspiring competitors to greater efforts. He knew nothing of "spectator christianity". Whatever he was in he was engaged in it wholeheartedly; he was "involved". So, again, he wrote to Timothy, "I have finished my course". The great marathon of his service for the Lord was nearly over. What he endured in its course he tells us something of in the chapter referred to above. Moreover he was never content to jog along behind the others while they set the pace; Paul was a front runner. Now, he was completing the last lap of his gruelling race; he had heard the bell and the tape which he had long had in his mind was now in sight. Only a few more strides and it would all be over. He urges those of us who may have a number of laps yet to complete, "Don't give up. I have finished the course; you keep on running to the end of the race."

Again, writing to Timothy, he counsels him, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." There is as serious a risk of letting things go in our day as there was in those times of old. We can understand Paul's concern for his co-worker that he should hold fast to the truth. Paul had passed on the truth to Timothy and he was under an obligation to pass it on, in turn, to faithful men who in their turn would teach others also. Perhaps rather as, in a relay race, each would run the course himself, but the baton must be carried by each successive runner, otherwise he runs in vain.

Paul was not the kind of christian who would let the truth slip. The faith, once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), was a treasure which he valued above anything the world could offer in the way of riches, fame, position or whatever else. So he joyfully affirms, "I have kept the faith". Through evil report and good report, uncrushed by opposition, unquenched by apathy, undismayed by difficulties, he had steadfastly maintained the truth which he received from the ascended and glorified Lord and had passed it on intact to the saints. What he wrote so long ago speaks to us livingly today, backed up by his own faithful example.

"Fight the good fight . . . as I have fought it to the finish."

"Run the race . . . as I have run the course to the end."

"Keep the faith . . . as I have kept the truth inviolate."

BIBLE STUDY — THE BOOK OF JOSHUA J. S. BLACKBURN

4 CROSSING THE JORDAN CHAPTER 3

It will be helpful at this point to recapitulate. A glance at p. 101, last paragraph, and especially at the Introduction to this series of papers on Joshua would recall to our minds thoughts which provide a good starting point for the present chapter. On p. 85, after a short consideration of some types, we wrote:

“Here is a justifiable simplification.

- 1) Canaan, in the earthly history of Joshua, corresponds to ‘heavenly places’ in the spiritual teaching of Ephesians.
- 2) The grapes of Eshcol, and all the lovely fruits of Canaan, correspond to the ‘spiritual blessings’ of Ephesians.
- 3) The fighting to possess Canaan in Joshua corresponds to the Christian’s holy war in Ephesians 6:10-18.”

The River Jordan was the “mystic barrier” (see p. 101) which must be crossed by a people entering Canaan from the wilderness journey. The means of the Christian’s entrance into the new life where the spiritual blessings are to be enjoyed lies before us in Ephesians 2:5,6. In vv. 1-3 we read that all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, were “by nature the children of wrath . . . but God, who is rich in mercy . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath *quickened us together with Christ* . . . and hath *raised us up together*, and made us *sit together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”.

Thus, when we read about the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, we understand that this power is manifested in two ways. First, in 1:20, it wrought in Christ “when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places”; but also secondly, it wrought in us (2:10), in that Christ’s quickening has become our quickening; Christ’s resurrection has become our resurrection; and the apostle is so bold by the Spirit, as to say that Christ’s sitting in the heavenly places has become our sitting in heavenly places. All these facts are facts in the spiritual realm of the heavenly places; and not a jot less real for living than any facts in the natural realm. Thus also we see how just is the view that Jordan, “descending” into the sea of death, represents death, in this connection, the death of One who was once dead on our behalf, on behalf of those who were dead in sins. Worthy art thou, O Lord, “for thou wast slain” for us in Thy mighty love, and art raised from the dead, and art alive for evermore.

At this point we pause to remark that the *purpose* of God for Israel did not include the wilderness journey. His purpose, so frequently made known beforehand, was to bring them out of Egypt and to bring them into Canaan. Having this in view, we might think of the passage of the Red Sea and the crossing of Jordan as coalescing with each other. Possibly they form two parts of one great victory, in which God takes up the people in the slavery in Egypt and places them in the land of Promise.

Viewing the same theme from the standpoint of the New

Testament fulfilment, it is vital to see the exact relation between the different epistles, especially Romans and Ephesians, in respect of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ. In Romans we are said to be "crucified with Christ" (6:6), "dead with Christ" (6:8), and "buried with Christ" (6:4). All this is *in view of* our walking in newness of life, but the consequences of our union with Christ risen do not in this passage explicitly include anything beyond our being dead with Him. We are at this point seen in His grave with a view to new life and walking in newness of life. In the most notable contrast with this, in Ephesians we have not a word about crucifixion, death or burial with Christ. The apostle's teaching in Ephesian terms finds us in death, since the first consequences of our being united to Christ is our being "quickened with Christ" (2:5). It then goes on to say "raised up together" and "made to sit together" (2:6). In these passages the exact bearing of "quickening" should be observed. It is not, as in today's colloquial speech, a stage in the birth process, but it is, in Scripture, quite exclusively a stage in the resurrection process. This is clearly seen in the usage of the word in the contexts of John 5:21 and 1 Corinthians 15:36. In the resurrection process the first thing needed by the body in the grave is the giving of life, and quickening means just this. Then comes raising into the activities of life.

Just as we have received a hint that we might consider the passage of the Red Sea and the crossing of Jordan as coalescing, so we can now see how the aspects presented in Romans and Ephesians coalesce to form one whole, crucified, dead, buried, quickened, raised and seated in heavenlies with Christ.

When did these six events take place in our experience? The answer is they never did take place in our experience. The Lord Jesus Christ it was who passed through these experiences. Since we were united to Christ in glory by the Holy Spirit sent down from Him in His victory, these events, His death and resurrection are put to our account. We find ourselves sitting, walking and fighting from positions determined by these events — crucifixion, death, and extending through to being raised and seated in heavenly places — passed through by Him. The consequences are experienced by the Christian. The serenity of the sitting, the patience of the walking and the valour of the fighting are brought within our experience since our Joshua is on the throne.

An illustration may be found helpful for seizing these great truths. Consider the case of a child born into a great historic family. The glories and the shame of events in its long and turbulent history were not experienced by the child who now by the simple fact of birth has become an integral part of the family life. The child's own personal experiences are nevertheless to an important degree determined by those events in the history of the family. So, the christian, alive in a position determined by that succession of events through our Lord Jesus Christ, has passed into the victory and peace of His session at the right hand of God. The child now experiences the happiness (or the misery) belonging to that family life, but its only *experienced* connection with the determining events is — its birth. So the Christian,

on hearing and believing the gospel of salvation, and at that moment receiving the Holy Spirit, is made one with Christ in glory, and so is made capable of the feelings which belong to that resurrection life.

All this surely helps us to see how valuable to us is the inspired narrative of the Book of Joshua. It is provided to illustrate and so to bring within the range of our faculties (empowered by the Holy Spirit) the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies set before us in Ephesians. Only those who in Christ have crossed the mystic river and who are on the realised ground of men and women quickened, raised and seated in the heavenlies, can enter into present effective possession of the spiritual blessings*. Only such will be able, strong in the Lord, to stand in such possession against the wiles of the devil.

Verse 1. "They moved from Shittim." This is the first movement of the camp since Numbers 22:1, where we read, "the children of Israel . . . pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho". Shittim was evidently the name of a location at the edge of the plains of Moab, from which the movements described in these chapters took place. Between Shittim and the new encampment on Jordan's banks the whole immense caravan of Israelites scrambled down the steep escarpment between the plateau on which they had encamped so long and the floor of the Jordan Rift at river level. At this time and place the Jordan was a turbulent flood perhaps one mile wide — a formidable barrier indeed.

Verses 2-4. The officers command the people, an enormous host, "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God" emerging from the centre of the host borne by the priests, "then . . . go after it". In these scenes from Israel's history it is the movements of the ark which determine the movements of the people, and the watchword is, *go after it*. This calls to mind the call of the Lord Jesus to the first disciples, "Come ye after me" (Mark 1:17). Likewise in Luke 14:27, with respect to the way of discipleship, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple". Through those pathways of deep spiritual experience in which the lessons of these chapters must be learned, it is nearness to the Lord, as He moves before, which is the secret of progress.

Verse 4. Although the essence of the command in verse 3 was that they must *go after* the ark, a strict limitation on carrying out this command is now imposed. "Come not near unto it." A measured space of one thousand yards was to separate the people from the ark even as they followed it. If the words, *go after it*, find an echo in the call to the disciples, *come after Me*, this space, by which they were to keep their distance from the ark as it passed through Jordan, surely takes us in thought to Gethsemane. There we read that, corresponding to the thousand yards between the ark and the people, there was to be

*i.e. in their present experience in this life. The believer's election and predestination before the foundation of the world, and his future — "knowing as he is known", and seeing "face to face" — are unconditionally assured to him.

a "stone's cast" between the favoured three disciples and the Lord as He entered into His agony. Read again the story in Mark 14:32-37. "And they came to a place which is called Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him . . . And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour [with me]?"

Our prayer is that some fresh realisation of the meaning and consequences of the death of Christ for His own may come before us as we ponder the history of the crossing of the Jordan. We can hardly expect this to take place unless we have first of all, and continue to have ever afresh, a realisation of the *fact* of His death. No Scripture presents the totality of the victory gained by the Lord Jesus over death more vividly to us than verse 15 of this chapter, shortly to come before us.

Verse 7. The passage of the Jordan was to take its place alongside that of the Red Sea. These two immense miracles demonstrated the presence of the living God with the hosts of Israel, and also authenticated the mediatorial dignity of Moses and Joshua. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language: Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back. . . . What ailed thee O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? . . . Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob . . ." (Psalm 114).

Verse 11. The discourse of Joshua to all the people, which occupies verses 9-13, is apparently interrupted by his exclamation, "Look, the ark . . . is moving in front of your eyes into the river".

Verse 13. There was great faith in the action of Joshua and of the people, in leaving the plateau and descending to take up position at the river's brink. Although the parallel with the drying up of the Red Sea had been noted (2:10), it would appear that this was the first explicit statement that the Jordan would be dried up to permit its passage in dry land.

Verse 15. "For Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest." Doubtless death has always been experienced in widely varying intensities by mankind, though always and only as "the wages of sin". For the Lord Jesus, death was invested with all its terrors. Psalm 22 mightily presents the inmost thoughts and anguish of One suffering death by crucifixion. We can never, never exhaust the utterances which the Lord Jesus addressed to His God at this moment. Every horror attendant on death as the wages of sin was there; hatred,

derision, scorn, and mocking of man inspired by Satan — all were there. The “bulls of Bashan”, the roaring lion, the encompassing dogs — representing the cruelty of men so animated — were there, and thus he was brought “into the dust of death. Yet, beyond all that might have been experienced by “our fathers”, there was *His* death — the forsaking by God.

There is a strange echo of these reflections in Jeremiah 12:5. “If in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how will thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” This last expression occurs again in Jeremiah 49:19 and 50:44 and also in Zechariah 11:3. In these four instances it is named as the lair of prowling lions. It certainly makes reference to the spate of Jordan during the harvest rains, but appears to connect this with the resulting tropical forests in these areas and the dangers from wild beasts. Is it possible that in the expression, “the swelling of Jordan”, indicating a test beyond what man can bear, the Spirit of God really intends a pointer to Psalm 22 and beyond, to the One whose suffering of death formed the basis for the saints’ entrance into spiritual blessings according to the counsel of God?

Verse 17. The subsequent history of Israel in Canaan begins with a formal summary of the leading facts. The priests bearing the ark “stood firm on *dry ground* in the midst of Jordan”, and “all the Israelites passed over on *dry ground*”. Thus, the ark of Jehovah opened the way and the people of Jehovah were at last on the soil of the promised land.

JESUS AND JOHN BAPTIST ————— E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

Luke’s Gospel describes that remarkable meeting of the two mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, before either child was born. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s salutation she noted, to use her own words, that the babe leaped in her womb for joy, and she asked, “Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” John, we are told, was filled with the Spirit, even from his mother’s womb; and we can say with certainty that it was by the Spirit that, on this occasion, he recognised the presence of his Lord and rejoiced.

It seems likely that Jesus and John, though somewhat closely related by natural ties (Elizabeth is called Mary’s “cousin”) never saw one another till Jesus’ baptism, for their homes were in Galilee and Judea respectively, and John spent his time in the desert till he began his testimony (Luke 1:80).

When the word of God came to John in the wilderness he began preaching in the country round Jordan, calling the people to repentance in view of the coming of the Christ. And always he emphasised that the One who was coming was far greater than himself — “the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose”. And again, “I baptise with water, but He shall baptise with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.”

Then Jesus, leaving Galilee, came along to Judea to the place where John was baptising, offering Himself for baptism. Now John had been instructed by the Spirit that he would see the Spirit alighting on Jesus and remaining on Him, this indicating to John the One who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. And though before seeing this sign (which other scriptures tell us came *after* the baptism) John had been unacquainted with Jesus (John 1:33), yet it would seem that the same intuitive spiritual recognition which had once told him of the presence of his Lord now told him who was coming to his baptism, and he exclaimed "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" But Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:14-15). So he baptised Him, and as Jesus came up out of the water, the promised sign was fulfilled. John saw the Spirit, in the visible form of a dove, alighting on Jesus and abiding there. And furthermore, the Father's voice was heard from heaven declaring "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

For John it was a tremendous experience indeed — the crown of his mission. He had preached, he had baptised, using every endeavour to prepare the people for Christ's coming. He was content to be, in the prophet's words which he himself quoted to the Pharisees, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mark 1:3). And here was his reward, to meet the Messiah, to see the Spirit of God descend upon Him, and to hear the Father's voice. The Gospels do not tell us whether anyone but John was aware of these things — John the Evangelist is also silent — but henceforth there was added to John's testimony the proclamation of Jesus as Son of God, the One who would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

Let us return for a moment to Jesus' words to John. "Suffer it to be so now" shows us that it was not, as with others, a baptism to repentance, but rather, as He said, the fulfilling of righteousness. He was putting the seal of His approval on what was the only righteous path for Israel then — that of confession and repentance.

But if there was righteousness in what Jesus did, there was also wonderful grace toward John. The Lord knew that His appearance would mean a diminution of John's status. In John's words, "He must increase, and I must decrease". And lest anyone should come to despise John's baptism, the Lord, by Himself submitting to it, gave to John most emphatic assurance of its value in His sight.

Up till then John had taken every opportunity of announcing the imminent appearance of the Christ as the One "who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (John 1:27), but had had no opportunity of pointing Him out. But when he saw Jesus coming to him he exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and related the sign by which he knew Him to be the Son of God who would baptise with the Spirit. It was an uncompromising identification of Jesus as the true Sacrifice to which every offered up lamb from ages past had pointed forward. He was the true Passover Lamb. He was, to quote Abraham's words, the Lamb whom God would Himself

provide. Only through Him could Israel's sins be taken away.

Actually John had said "who taketh away the sin of the world". In the writer's view, it is a mistake to raise here the question of "sin" or "sins", or of whether the whole world was included. Rather, John was pointing out the One who was able to deal with the world's sin. That is the sole question here. In the same way we find the Samaritans speaking of Jesus as Saviour of the World.

When, on the next day, he again saw Jesus, John was accompanied by two of his disciples, and cried out "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two at once left John and followed Jesus, and became His disciples. Soon they were gathering others also. However, some of John's followers remained with him and continued to baptise.

Later on, when Jesus and His disciples came down from Capernaum to Judea where John was baptising, the disciples of Jesus began baptising also, doubtless supposing that in this way they were serving their new Master. He did not stay their zeal, though He did not Himself baptise, but it was soon pointed out that many more came to Jesus than to John. "All men come to Him," they said to John.

John's answer was characteristic. He referred to his previous testimony, with its consistent theme of the supremacy of Christ, who should come after him. Now he added, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, and I must decrease" (John 3:29-30).

As we read this striking explanation of John's unselfish joy we may ask if the "bride" should be given definite interpretation. While it is true that later in the New Testament the Church is spoken of under this figure, it does not seem that John's vision extended so far. Israel in the Old Testament is pictured not as the bride but as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah, though Hosea hints at her restoration. Isaiah 62:5 is purely illustrative. So perhaps we do well to enjoy John's illustration for the light it throws on his completely unselfish attitude to Christ, and leave it at that.

When John says further, "He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth", we perceive how completely he discerned the divine character of the One to whom he had borne witness (John 3:31). The remaining verses of this chapter carry on the theme of the supremacy of Christ and the vital importance of believing in Him. Whether the Baptist uttered them or whether they are the evangelist's inspired comment, filling out the theme, is not clear.

This greater popularity of Jesus seems to have attracted the attention of the Pharisees, but if John reacted unselfishly, no less did the blessed Lord refuse to countenance the idea of conflict. He responded to the situation by withdrawing from Judea and retiring to Galilee, leaving the field clear for John. Not till John was imprisoned by Herod did the Lord begin His great Galilean ministry of preaching and healing.

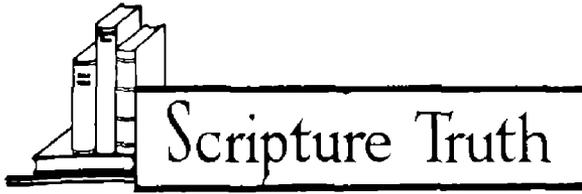
John's Failure

The spiritual depression caused by his imprisonment, coupled with the news his disciples brought of the great miracles Jesus was performing, weighed upon his spirit so that John even began to wonder if his whole testimony had been mistaken. If such miracles showed that the kingdom of God was indeed near, why was he languishing in prison? So he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

Here was the end of John's witness to Jesus! And now, with no word of reproach or rebuke, the Lord bears His own witness to John! First, to John's own soul. He sends the messengers back to John to tell him of the wonderful works He had even then been engaged in — works which answered the query as to whether Jesus indeed was the Christ, because they fitted exactly the picture which the prophets had painted. The blind received sight, the deaf their hearing; the lame were healed, the lepers cleansed, and even the dead were raised up. Equally speaking of the Christ, if not miraculous, the poor had the gospel preached to them. And the Lord added a special word of encouragement for John — a blessing to him who should not be offended in Himself.

Then the Lord turned to re-establishing John's reputation with the people. It was, He said, no waverer that had attracted them to his preaching in the wilderness, nor a man unable to endure hardship. He was not only a genuine prophet, but the greatest of all the prophets. What a wonderful Master is Jesus! What grace to a failing servant!

One more scene we must look at. It was not God's time to rescue John from Herod's clutches, but let us mark how Jesus dealt with the man who not only refused John's testimony of righteousness, but later murdered this honoured servant of God. When the Lord Jesus was sent by Pilate to Herod, He refused to answer a single one of Herod's many questions about Himself and His teachings. It was a pointed contrast to His patient and gracious dealing with Pilate (Luke 23:8-9; John 18:33-38; 19:8-11).



(incorporating *Words of Help*)

NOVEMBER, 1981

SAMUEL'S SONS _____ **ALLAN RETALLICK**

ADVICE TO PARENTS

It is a great disappointment to a believer who has sought to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when he finds that they reject the teaching and example of their parents, and walk in the counsel of the ungodly. We find many such cases in the Bible, not least among the kings. Hezekiah, for example, noted for his godliness and humility, was succeeded by a son, Manasseh, who set such a bad example to the nation that God had to punish Judah by means of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

When we read, in the early chapters of the first Book of Samuel, of how Hannah prayed for a son, and later gave him back to the Lord, we are delighted to read of the early listening to the voice of the Lord on the part of this young child, and how he grew before the Lord (1 Samuel 2:21). At the end of chapter 3 we read that "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground". In the last verse of that chapter, indeed, we read that the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. Much later, nearing the end of his life, he could say to the people that had asked for a king: "I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you" (1 Samuel 12:2,3). The people could only answer: "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand."

Yet we read in chapter 8 of this same Book that Samuel's sons, whom he had appointed judges in his place, "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (v. 3). No wonder the children of Israel were dissatisfied with their judges, although the alternative that they proposed was no solution to the problem. This state of affairs must have reminded Samuel of the similar conditions in Israel when he was a child. Then Eli, a God-fearing priest, had two wicked sons, and a man of God had warned the old man in vain: "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30), for later God had to give the message to the young Samuel: "I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity *which he knoweth*; because his sons made

themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Samuel 3:13). We can well imagine that Samuel would have done his best to avoid the sad mistake of Eli. How often do parents have to admit that, while they sought to serve God themselves, they allowed their children too much liberty to choose their own ways, and when they saw these things in the young people, either protested in the half-hearted way that Eli employed, or even condoned their evil conduct. The marginal reading of 1 Samuel 3:13 reads: "He frowned not upon them."

It has been and will be a great temptation to some to seek the best possible schools and tutors for their children, and see to it that their sons enter a lucrative profession, while often oblivious to the damaging influences of worldly association and modernist teachers that are undermining their children's faith. In such cases we are not surprised when things fail to work out as we might have hoped. When, too, there is no real confidence in the parents on the part of the younger generation, and when there is no interest shown by the parents in the problems of the growing children, we can expect that things will go wrong; and yet, as so many of us have to admit, these are areas in which most of us fail more than we realise.

Psalm 78 is full of solemn warnings to young parents. The people of Israel are reminded of God's goodness to their nation from the beginning of His dealings with them, as their fathers had told them, and as they desire to make known to their own children. The reason for making these things known is "that they might set their hopes in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7). Far from setting up their forefathers as examples to be followed, the next verse warns them not to be "as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." Not many parents would dare to use the words of the apostle to his spiritual children: "Be my imitators."

Another characteristic of many parents may also have been true of Eli, although we are not told this. How often, when the family is seated at table, does father or mother begin to criticise other believers, possibly even those that have ministered the Word that very day. We so often forget the exhortation to esteem others better than ourselves; but, even if we think unkind thoughts about others (which is certainly sinful), to express these things in the presence of the children undermines their confidence in the Lord's servants, and ultimately in the Word of God, and may turn the hearts of the young ones away from the Lord.

We may be sure that Samuel would have avoided all these mistakes. He was instructed by God Himself. He had a heart for the things of God. He was a man of prayer and devotion. Not only so, but he carried out his task as "judge" faithfully. We read of his regular circuit throughout the land, and, as we have seen, no one could accuse him of unfairness or self-seeking. It was, too, a life-long service. We read in 1 Samuel 7:15 that he judged Israel all the days of his life. Even when they had a king, like the nations round about them, we hear him saying: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to

pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Samuel 12:23). This is surely a practical lesson for all of us that have grown-up children, living their own lives, seeking to bring up *their* children — possibly not quite as we should have done it — and in a world where there are increasing pressures and spiritual influences that were not known in the world of a generation ago. Let us not cease to *pray* for them, but also, as we have opportunity, also to *teach* them the good and right way. They may not always seem to heed our advice, but at least our conscience will be clear in this matter. It goes without saying that even this must be done in a spirit of love and humility, without setting ourselves up as examples in any way.

The truth is that, in spite of the good example of Samuel, his sons did not walk in his ways. We pray for our children, we speak to them about the things of the Lord, we seek to be a good example to them (in all humility as before the Lord), and yet we cannot believe for them, much as we would like to do so, and we cannot choose their ways for them. Just as our God gave to His creature Man a will of his own, so He has given to us all a will that we may use to glorify Him, or to refuse to obey His word. We know this quite well in theory, but when we see the evidence of the old nature in our own children, and more particularly as we see our own weaknesses and evil characteristics reproduced in them, it is a humbling and mortifying experience. With what delight did Eve hold that precious little bundle of life in her arms and say: "I have gotten a man from the Lord." With what grief and dismay must she have looked upon the perpetrator of the first murder in human history! Brethren and sisters, let us cry to God continually for our children (and grandchildren) as never before, for the days are evil, and they need this "hedge" of prayer about them. I borrow this word from Satan's words concerning Job, who prayed daily for his children. The accuser of the brethren said: "Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" (Job 1:10).

Godly living is not an inheritance that we can pass on to our children: they must have faith and obedience for themselves. Nevertheless, we are bound to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6), and to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), not forgetting that our own example will have more influence on them than anything that we may say. How often I hear, when visiting aged saints, "My father was a wonderful Christian. I do thank God for what I learned from him". If our children, like those of Samuel, walk not in the ways of the Lord, let us humble ourselves before the Lord and ask Him if we have failed in our task, so that we may be able to help others faced with similar problems, but let us also pray that their eyes may be opened and their hearts touched, and that they may, as the Prodigal Son of old, "come to themselves", and return to the old paths, wherein they may find rest. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"

THE DOOR; THE GOOD SHEPHERD ——— COLIN CURRY

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”
“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”
John 10:9, 11

These two further grand assertions made by the Lord Jesus are closely connected, and it will be advisable to consider them together. The relationship between Shepherd and sheep has a special kind of mutuality about it, which gives His teaching here a quality and attraction of its own. Perhaps people who handle sheep will have the edge over other readers in appreciating the bond which is illustrated in this way: but town-dwellers need not feel at a disadvantage, for surely everyone who respects our Lord's words senses the value and the apposite nature of this figure. The allegory centres on His activities as Shepherd, though His function as the Door of the sheep also has its place. Perhaps it is not surprising that unbelieving hearers made little of these words (verse 6), since faith in Him and appreciation of His sayings go hand in hand. But to all who really know our Lord this figure of the Shepherd of the sheep appeals strongly; and, conversely, these words of His contribute considerably in deepening our bond with Himself. The parable enacts itself as we read it! Hearing His Voice, the stimulus comes readily to follow Him, in a willing and reliant way.

This Shepherd-imagery appears elsewhere in Scripture. Old Testament passages had spoken of God as the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:1; Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:10f). The responsibilities of under-shepherds were clear in the O.T. too. In several places the prophets castigate shepherds who had failed in their duty (e.g. Isaiah 56:9-12; Ezekiel 34). The latter chapter also shows that a Shepherd after God's heart would in due time appear (verse 23). Our Lord's words are set against this O.T. background. They also follow on from the incidents in the immediately preceding chapter in the Gospel, where current false shepherds in Israel are seen in their full colours. It is not really difficult to discern which thieves and robbers were immediately in mind and even the hirelings, in this picture drawn by our Lord, though it includes others in the same mould. The once-blind man also fits well into the picture: he is an excellent example of one of “His own sheep”, hearing His voice and drawn after Him, outside the pale of formal Christless tradition.

The title, “the *good* Shepherd”, makes the contrast with all that was false and inadequate in other leaders, just as “the *true* bread” and “the *true* light” pick Him out as the sole genuine fulfiller of those functions. “Good” here is a warmer word, however, and may suggest the pure attractiveness of His unique quality of goodness.

The Fold

“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring . . . and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd” (verse 16).

The A.V. mistranslates this verse (and obscures the sense) by using

the same word "fold" twice. At the same time the verse, properly read, makes clear the meaning of the word "fold" as it appears in verse 1, and is understood in verses 2 and 3. Gentile believers would later be brought into the one flock, along with believers drawn from "this fold". The Lord in the opening verses is referring to His coming into the Jewish fold. Among many others there, He has those who are *His own* sheep. These He leads out, and will bring more from elsewhere, to form "one flock", under "one Shepherd".

A fold is an enclosure in which sheep are confined by physical barriers at its boundaries. Sheep are kept in by constraints on their movements, outwardly imposed. Incursions from outside are hampered by those barriers too. It is an apt picture of the Jewish position, separated (and rightly separated by God) from the Gentiles by a "middle wall of partition". It was for their safety, so as to preserve their purity and special witness to God as a people of His favour and choice; a people who carried His revelation of Himself at that time. It had deteriorated into a special pride of position, an arrogant separatism, a disdain for outsiders. Also the moral constraints of the law were a burden; the spirit of humility and willing obedience to God was far from prominent, though the letter of the Law and its fine details were prized and venerated.

The Lord Jesus speaks of His coming into that fold by the door. He takes the place of the rightful and expected Entrant into that area of things. He came there with rights, there was an appointed way by which He would come. His birthplace, His manner of birth, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David — in how many ways was His advent specified beforehand! The door, the way in, was clear; and He answered perfectly to every foreshadowing of Himself. Herod might seek to prevent it, the inn at Bethlehem might be full, but the appointed entrance took place. Sovereignly He came, the Coming One, sent by the Father, the Shepherd of the sheep. How this contrasts with the stealthy, self-seeking methods of others depicted by our Lord, whose furtive, back-door approaches betrayed the kind of persons that they were.

When He came, He was welcomed by some. It would be pushing the allegory too far, perhaps, to identify the "porter" closely, but there were those who "opened up" to Him, especially in their hearts. Simeon and Anna and others welcomed His coming with gladness. They were in tune with the Spirit of God in greeting Him with such satisfaction. John the Baptist, the Forerunner, spoke of His imminent arrival, and pointed Him out when He came. The angelic hosts, too, played their part in that glad reception.

But the fold of Judaism had no general welcome for the Saviour when He came. "No room at the Inn" presaged a constant general attitude towards Him. "His own (people) received Him not." Within that Jewish enclosure were numerous sheep, of many kinds, but His action there was to discriminate between "His own sheep" and all the others, leading them *out* of that fold, and *into* that free and abundant area-of-living where He is in total charge of them.

The bond between Shepherd and Sheep

“I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (verse 14).

The link between a shepherd and his sheep is a two-way one, and this is one of the prime features of this illustration. Of course a shepherd knows each sheep in a far more thorough way than the sheep can ever know the shepherd, and this also reflects the truth of the matter pictured in this analogy. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep in an all-knowing way. He cares for them individually; He calls them by name. Their needs and their well-being alike are thoroughly catered for by Him; there are no limits to His devotion to them. The sheep, on the other hand, know the Shepherd in a more limited way; but they *do* know Him, and in a sense they know Him well. His Voice (unlike any other voice) touches a chord within them, and they respond to Him, and follow, content to be under His care and guidance. Small beings under the charge of the greatest of all Persons have certainly an incomplete knowledge of many things, but they know *Him* in a certain intimate and intuitive way, and they know that their reliance on Him is not misplaced. Their link with Him is born of His care for them, His matchless devotion to them, even to the point of laying down His life for the sheep. The firmness of our bond with Him, and its permanence, arise from that immense action on our behalf.

The Lord Jesus appears to stress recognition of His Voice, and response to it, as the principal ingredient in the attachment of His own sheep to Himself. Four times He singles this out (verses 3, 4, 16, 27). They hear that Voice, they know it, they ignore strange voices; His voice moves them towards Himself. Those other sheep, to be brought to Him later from outside the Jewish fold, will also respond to that Voice. Critics and unbelievers are no sheep of His: they hear Him speak, but they do not hear Him in that innate and intimate way which draws a person after Himself. This kind of reciprocal knowledge, between the Shepherd and a genuine sheep of His, is placed on the highest plane of all in the words which follow verse 14. The sense is continuous. “As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father”; this, the highest possible pattern of mutual knowledge and esteem, is in some sense the same sort of link as exists between the Shepherd and His sheep. Truly this is something of a profound and special nature!

The Door of the Sheep: crossing the Threshold

“He leadeth them *out*” and “by me if any man enter *in*, he shall be saved . . .”.

These expressions indicate two sides of the same coin for a Jew who became a true follower of Christ. It is the transition from a Jewish background into the full light and blessing of Christianity. But entry into all that Christ provides is possible for *any* man, whatever his background. All may go in through the Door; though with each it must involve a personal response to the Voice that picks us out, and a quiet and obedient reliance on Him, of the kind we have already considered.

The Door is wide open; He laid down His life to make it so. Our safety, our security, indeed everything that lies beyond that great Entrance, rests on *that* basis. He is the way into real Christian life, and of course He Himself is right at the centre of that experience after we have "entered in". We draw close here to another of our Lord's great declarations. "The Way" and "the Life" both subsist in Him.

What lies on the other side of the Door, for a follower of Christ, entering in through Him? Salvation, freedom, extensive sustenance and satisfaction, peace and safety under His supervision; life too, which is not a meagre, bare living, but *abundant* life. Indeed it is eternal life, imperishable life, as later verses show; it is life which begins with the quickening Voice of Jesus, the Son of God, and our appreciation of its abundance and joy continues to deepen now, though its fulness will be better understood in the eternal scenes.

The reader can see for himself how these statements are based on phrases in the verses. What other words than the Scriptural ones can properly describe the life that is lived in those fields where "sheep may safely graze". Let us always remember that He gave His life so that our free entry into these satisfying and rich blessings might be ensured. His willing, costly love is the only yardstick that measures the scope (and the quality) of those pastures into which He admits us as the Door of the sheep.

His "other" sheep; the one flock

Twentieth-century Christian readers must be stirred by the words of our Lord in verse 16. He saw ahead into the scenes in the book of Acts, when the Door was opened to Gentile believers. But He saw much further afield, and looked down the centuries too. He had every single sheep in mind, and they *must* be brought in. We can marvel at His foresight, and the confidence-of-fulfilment contained in His words. The words reflect His strong desire to bring it all about. We are surely deeply thankful that nothing fails that He intends, and that these words cover ourselves too.

The notion of a flock of sheep, centred on a shepherd, is worth attention. It differs sharply from the idea of sheep herded in a fold. Physical confinement holds sheep together in a *fold*. But a *flock* stays together without being fenced in. Attachment to the shepherd gives a flock its coherence and its unity. Straying sheep may at times need to be recovered, but the basic tendency of the sheep is to stay near their provider, protector and leader. So it is with the "one flock" and the "one Shepherd". That *attraction* towards Himself, felt by all who respond to His great love for us, is our bond with one another too, since we are joint followers of the same Shepherd. How this rebukes partisanship, divisiveness, the liking for "inner rings", sectarian labels and attitudes amongst Christians. We are prone to fold-like preferences; but the Name of our Lord is our sole rallying-point, and what suits His honour should be our primary concern.

Finally, the great words of verses 17f, and 28ff, belong to this passage, though they really deserve separate attention. Shepherd and sheep fade, as an illustration, into the great eternal verities which

underlie that picture. A short paragraph may indicate a little of the high content of these verses. From the standpoint in which the words were spoken, the Son, ever with the Father in the timeless communion of eternal love, was here on earth in holy Manhood at a special point in time. The surpassing quality of that love was being displayed in Him. Its ultimate demonstration came when He died. That, above all else, was a flawless act of devotion to His Father, calling forth His Father's love for Him in a special way. But that great action would also bring others into the grasp of the eternal love. He gave His life *for the sheep*. He *laid down* His life; no man took it from Him. It was a willing act of measureless love and complete self-giving. He did it Himself; His Father's will was commandment to Him, such was the manner of His love. Love was *in command* there, and love was *obedient* too. Though it is true at all times, how perfectly the Father and the Son were at one in that hour of all hours. But the *mastery* of love was also shown there. He laid down His life, that He might take it again. Nothing could stand in the way of such supreme love; all adverse powers are outmatched by it. How small is the threat of thieves and robbers, wolves and other destroyers, when even death has been overturned by divine love! His sheep are safe in the mighty clasp of His love. He and His Father are One; and our ability to count ourselves as "His own sheep" is one outcome of that unity of purpose and of love. It has brought us into the "one flock"; we shall be around Him for ever! Already we have from Him that gift of eternal life, and we shall live it to the full with Him in those imperishable realms where divine love will welcome us.

The story has been told of a skilled reader who impressed an audience by a recital of Psalm 23. He was followed by an older man, untrained and rough in manner, who read the same Psalm in a different way which stirred the hearers far more deeply. Asked about it later, the first reader said "*I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd*". We must admire our Lord's words in this chapter, and let us know them well; but may that close and living link with the Good Shepherd be a personal reality with us all.

MAN'S FALL AND CHRIST'S TRIUMPH — R. A. CREETH

Looked at from the human standpoint we may well say, what a tragedy was the fall of man! Paul writes in Romans 5:12, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And with the advent of sin came in many subsequent evils, for the whole creation was affected by Adam's fall.

Let us consider what the Lord God said to the guilty pair in Genesis 3:16-19. Unto the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children" (here we have the first mention of *pain*). "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (here is *subjection to authority*).

And unto Adam He said, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake" (here is the introduction of *the curse*). "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (this is the advent of *sorrow*). "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . ." (thorns would spring from a cursed earth). "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground . . ." (here is the first mention of toil and *sweat*). "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (death is the direct result of the fall).

We can see that at least seven things came in at the fall: pain, subjection, the curse, sorrow, thorns, sweat, death. Let us consider these things in connection with the Lord Jesus, and see how they found their full measure in Him, through whom alone they can and will be removed.

Pain. The suffering of pain in conception was the direct outcome of man's fall. The apostle Paul gives this a spiritual application when he reminds the Galatians of his agonising for them. He writes, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). Paul knew what soul-travail involved, but who suffered like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? It is spoken of Him prophetically, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). The word "travail" refers to but one kind of suffering, that of birth pangs. The Lord Jesus travailed in His soul, such was His intense suffering, that we, His innumerable seed, might be born by the Word and Spirit of God to His eternal joy and satisfaction. And when the day comes that He will present to Himself His blood-bought church, glorified and perfect, He will indeed see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Subjection to authority. We read in Galatians 4:4, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". Our blessed Lord submitted Himself to the authority of the law, manifesting His perfection under that law, but the end in view was redemption, "to redeem them that were under the law, that we (Gentiles as well as Jews) might receive the adoption of sons".

But may we not say that our Lord's subjection is seen most clearly in His taking upon Himself the form of a servant (bond-slave), and when being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:7-8).

The Curse. We read in Galatians 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". The apostle is showing how those who were under the curse of a broken law are redeemed and liberated from it. It was not by keeping it on our behalf, as is often

taught, but by "being made a curse for us". The cross, with all its degradation and shame, was awarded to Him, who by His life of perfect obedience had merited the fullest blessing. He suffered death, death inflicted by God in judgment because of the disobedience of those for whom He became Surety. Let us remember that He suffered such a death in order to procure our redemption, our deliverance from all bondage.

Sorrow. As we trace the path of the Lord Jesus through this world, it is beautiful to see how thoroughly He entered into the circumstances of those in need, and how closely He identified Himself with their sorrow, thus fulfilling what is recorded of Him in Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:16-17. For instance, how deeply He entered into the sorrow of the bereaved sisters at Bethany! "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled . . . Jesus wept." And not only did He weep in sympathy with Mary, but He felt so keenly the havoc that sin had brought into the world that we find Him groaning in Himself as He approached the grave, though He was about to demonstrate His power over death by bringing the dead man back to life.

Now let us consider the deep sorrow of the cross. Our Lord speaks prophetically in Lamentations 1:12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Who indeed can measure the sorrow experienced by the Holy Sufferer on the cross when God was dealing in righteous judgment with sin? That blessed One was made sin for us, the One who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Thorns produced by a cursed earth. What a contrast with Genesis 2:8-9, where we read, "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food". Now since the fall all is changed, man is driven out, and the divine sentence is, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee".

Let us consider once more the holy Son of God who became a curse for us. Think of the shameful treatment He received at the hands of the soldiers of the Roman governor, who "took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a *crown of thorns*, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. Then they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head". Then after further mocking they led Him away to crucify Him (see Matthew 27:27-31).

The sweat of the face. How striking and significant that we should read of sweat in connection with our Lord Jesus Christ! The

garden of Gethsemane witnessed the defeat of the enemy who sought to turn the blessed Lord from the cross that awaited Him. But our Lord did not shrink from suffering and shame: in communion with His Father He weighed all that was before Him, and submitted implicitly to the Father's will. "And being in conflict He prayed more intently. And His sweat became as great drops of blood, falling upon the earth" (Luke 22:44, New Trans.). W. Kelly's comment on this passage reads, "It is not meant that His sweat fell merely like great drops of blood, but that it became this as it were, that is, the sweat was so tinged with blood which exuded from Him in His conflict that it might have seemed pure blood". What intense suffering was His as He entered so completely into the consequences of man's shameful fall!

The sentence of death. "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" — this was the Lord God's pronouncement to Adam after his fall. And from that time onwards death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Death is this God's judgment against sin. But there has been One here upon whom death had no claim, for He was wholly without sin, nor had death any power in His presence. Yet one of the reasons given in Hebrews 2 for His incarnation is that He might suffer death. He was "made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death . . . so that by the grace of God He should taste death for everything" (verse 9, New Trans.).

Another reason for the incarnation is given in verses 14-15. The Lord Jesus became man that He might defeat the power of Satan, and deliver God's saints from the fear of death. This He did by meeting Satan in his own stronghold of death, annulling his power and setting his captives free.

All these things — pain, subjection, curse, sorrow, thorns, sweat, death — express the ruin and misery of a world alienated from God through man's fall in Eden. How good it is that we can look forward to a new heaven and a new earth when in the eternal state all the sad effects of the fall will be removed. For "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

SOME BETTER THING

T. BALDERSTON

8. A HIGH PRIEST FOR US: HEBREWS 8

Chapter 8 opens by consolidating what has just been taught, and by adding a further step to that teaching.

The consolidation is to be found in the clause, *We have such an high priest*. By *such an high priest* the writer meant the high priest he had just described in such wonderful language in 7:26-28; but the emphasis of the clause is on the *we have*. If we grasp the difficulty which the first readers felt in appropriating this High Priest to themselves, we have a key to the understanding of the chapter. The difficulty lay in their subjection to Scripture and their tenacious grasp of the truth that they could not approach God other than by the way He had marked out for them. They appear to have believed (erroneously) that the Law and its institutions were permanently binding on those "of the seed of Israel". These readers believed that Jesus was the Christ, that the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of Him, and so on, but they also believed that God could not be inconsistent with Himself, that if He had ordained the Law in perpetuity as regards them, He could not subsequently negate His own Word. Thus the writer needed to prove, *from the Old Testament Scripture itself*, that God had not bound the Law permanently upon them, that He Himself had indeed released them from their obligation to it. That the inspired writer needed to spend so much time on the matter says much in favour of these readers and their attitude to Scripture, that could not be said in favour of many present-day believers.

The inspired writer entertained great hopes of the effect on his readers of appropriating this truth. We modern readers, whose approach to the matter is unencumbered by such difficulties, might well ask ourselves: what does it mean to us that God has appointed *such an high priest* for us?

The further step in the teaching is that *He is set down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary*. . . . Apart from 4:14, this is the first place in the epistle to speak explicitly of the mode, the power, and the sphere of operation of "our" High Priest. *He has sat down* (New Trans.). In chapter 1:3, 13, allusion was made to Psalm 110:1 as a demonstration of His own divine glory; here the emphasis is on His office. He has sat down as High Priest; that is, He has sat down for *us*. In 10:11-15 the wonderful meaning of this is brought out. The transcendent power of His High Priestly activity is indicated by the next clause. The *majesty on high* of 1:3 is expanded here to *the throne of the majesty in the heavens* to emphasise the fact that no more exalted place, no nearer place to God could be conceived than that which He occupies. Finally, the sphere of His operation is indicated by *a minister of the sanctuary, etc.* That is, the sphere of His High Priestly activity is heavenly, and, this being so, He perfects the people He acts for according to the exacting standards of holiness of that transcendent sphere. In chapters 9 and 10 a

correspondence will be brought out between the heavenly sanctuary, the value and efficacy of the shed blood of Christ, and the perfected consciences of the saints on the basis of which we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus". Already this correspondence is beginning to be made in 8:3. *For every high priest is ordained to offer . . . wherefore it is of necessity that this [one] have somewhat to offer.* In view of the change of tense of *offer* in 8:3 from present to aorist (P. E. Hughes) and of the subject being introduced in the next two chapters it is natural to interpret the *somewhat* (a singular pronoun) as His precious blood in the virtue of which He has entered into the sanctuary; others however, bearing in mind the significance of the "has sat down" in 8:1, connect it with 13:15. At any rate, we are introduced to the fact that there is a link between the nature of the sanctuary and the sacrifice appropriate there.

All this would be strange reading to the first readers who knew but one sanctuary and had presumably not thought about the implications of the sacrifice of Christ for the sacrifices offered there. The writer concedes their unspoken difficulty in 8:4, but in order to emphasise his point: the earthly system in which no place could be found for the High Priestly service of the Lord Jesus was, according to the Law itself (Exodus 25:40) but a pattern, or type, of the heavenly sanctuary shown Moses in the mount. It was an exact type, and therein lay all its dignity, but it was only a type.

However, this relative depreciation of the Mosaic sanctuary did not clinch the matter. Type or no type, the readers believed themselves to be bound to that economy and its sanctuary by the undertakings of their forbears and by the warnings of Scripture (Exodus 24:6-8; Deuteronomy 28-30; cp. Joshua 8:30-35). This sense of "binding" or "obligation", as in a contract, is what is expressed by the word "covenant". Some deny that "covenant" has the force of "contract" here, but the employment of the word "mediator" shows that the thought of two "parties" (albeit two entirely unequal parties) is prominently in view. The writer now employs the fact that Christ's ministry in the sanctuary is commensurate with His mediatorship of a better covenant, established upon better promises (8:6) to break their sense of obligation to the Old Covenant institutions. He does this with the help of the longest unbroken quotation in the epistle (8:8-12 = Jeremiah 31:31-34). This shows its importance; however his main reason for quoting it appears in the single brief comment he appends in 8:13. *In that He [namely "the Lord", as in 8:8] says, New, he has made the first old.* That is, the fact of the pronouncement of the *New Covenant* declares the Old Covenant obsolete and no longer binding upon the readers. This came into force through Christ's mediatorship; and how it was that Christ mediated the New Covenant is stated in 9:15. By His sufferings He discharged the debts which those subject to the Old Covenant had accumulated under it, and thus set them free completely for a new relationship with God. Thereby He created the preconditions for taking up a heavenly ministry on behalf of these readers. This is how Christ's more excellent ministry is predicated

upon His mediatorship (8:6).

Thus the principal purpose for the writer's quoting of this passage from Jeremiah is a negative one — to dispel their sense of bondage to the Old Covenant. For this purpose however he need not have extended his quotation beyond 8:8, whereas in fact he quoted much more. 8:6 indicates also that there is a positive correspondence between the ministry and the covenant. In that verse he wrote, not a "new" but, a "better" covenant: "better" and "more excellent" evidently correspond with each other. The "betterness" of the covenant seems here to consist in the "better promises" on which it is founded, and "promises" here means not (as we might imagine) the inheritance, but the relationship with God enjoyed under it, for this is what the quotation speaks of. These "promises" appear to be threefold. Firstly, an immediate relationship with God. He Himself will be their teacher (contrast Exodus 20:19) and all shall know Him. Secondly, God Himself will create in them the inward power to act according to His will: He will write His Laws in their hearts. Thirdly, God Himself will give them a moral standing as responsible people before Him: He will remember their sins no more. A correspondence between these "promises" and the consequences of Christ's present ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is evident, although only the last of them is actually expounded (10:15-18).

This is the sense in which the New Covenant has reference to us too as 2 Corinthians 3 tells us, so that Hebrews 8 applies to us as Gentile readers on the positive, if not on the negative side. In 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul described himself as a "new covenant minister" in this limited sense, that his ministry was "not of the letter but of the spirit". It created an inward relationship of liberty between God and the believer. If this is what is meant by "new covenant", then it comprehends us. And this is indeed the loose sense in which it is commonly used in Christendom. But in Scripture there is much more to the New Covenant than just the description of this inward living relationship God has formed with us. It speaks of the fact that God, having once committed Himself to Israel, will never let her go (Jeremiah 32:40; 33:24-26). In the case of these readers, for example, the fruits of the New Covenant were a pledge that God had not cast away His people, that in time to come "all Israel will be saved"; so Romans 11:1 tells us. And what the New Covenant will mean for Israel in *that* day is told us in Jeremiah 32:36 - 33:26 (cp. Romans 9:26). An analogy may help. We might say, "India possesses a Westminster democracy". But this description of political relations there would not imply that India is a part of the U.K.

There are many who seek to generalise the highly specific argument of Hebrews 8 without realising, apparently, that by so doing they actually destroy it. Geoffrey B. Wilson, in an otherwise often helpful little commentary*, allows himself the astonishing statement about 8:8, "The author has no other purpose in quoting it than to prove . . . that [Christ's] church now constitutes the New Israel of God", adding

*G. B. Wilson, *Hebrews, A Digest of Reformed Comment* (Banner of Truth, 1979), p. 108.

an anti-dispensationalist footnote. Apart from the obvious question, "Where does *the writer* say that he intends a metaphorical understanding of Israel and Judah, and how were *the readers* to know?", all that Wilson shows is that he has quite failed to grasp the force of the argument. Unless "Israel and Judah" is meant literally, the quotation could not hope to convince the readers of *their* release from the Old Covenant. For only if the New Covenant is with the *same party* as the Old Covenant, does it, *by its existence*, render the Old obsolete. The writer probably emphasised its specificity by writing in 8:8, "For finding fault, he says *to them*", namely, to the very people with whom the Old Covenant had been concluded. A New Covenant with a metaphorical Israel might indeed have application to believing Jews, and *yet* fail to release them from their obligations, as still "Jews after the flesh", to the Old Covenant institutions. That is, Wilson's interpretation would confirm the very error that the writer is at pains to rectify.

The doctrine that the New Covenant in itself is with Israel, but that we have the spirit of it, is degenerating into a cliché. Unless we understand it and can derive it from Scripture we are defenceless in the face of increasing attacks upon the distinction between "Israel and the Church". These attacks are at bottom attacks upon the faithfulness of God (Romans 9-11).

THREE TYPES OF TRIAL FOR FAITH

There are three sorts of tribulation or dealings of God in the way of discipline in the wilderness with us. First — *Tribulation in which we may glory*; for instance, suffering *for* Christ in this evil world. This is different from suffering *with* Christ. All Christians suffer with Him, because they possess life in Him, and that life must necessarily suffer in a scene which was all suffering to Him. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. But to some the suffering comes for faithfulness to Christ; it is also looked upon as a *gift*. "Unto you it is *given* in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer *for* his sake" (Philippians 1:29). In this we can indeed make our boast. How far this goes beyond suffering for conscience's sake! A man to suffer for it may be a loser, because he does his business conscientiously: perhaps his profits may not be as large as those who have no conscience in the matter. But the same man may have found the pathway of a rejected Christ in this evil world, have had grace to turn his feet into the track, and the result may be that he loses his business altogether. The mistake is in judging things merely as right and wrong by conscience. Conscience is never a guide. Paul followed his conscience, and persecuted Christ and wasted the Church of God. Following Christ is the only sure pathway, and it is a Christ whom the world has cast out, and whom God has set in glory. Can I have better treatment from the world than He had? "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but *because* ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, *therefore* the world hateth you.

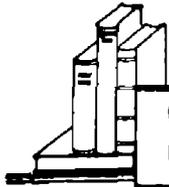
Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him who sent me"; that is the Father (John 15:19, 21).

There is a second kind of *suffering under which I must humble myself*, and in which I cannot boast. I allude to the suffering of various kinds which comes under God's righteous government, and from Him as a Father, for evil allowed and unjudged in our ways. The Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to each one's work, therefore we have to pass the time of our *sojourning here* (to which this judgment applies) in fear; there is no fear in heaven (1 Peter 1:17). How much these retributive dealings of a Holy Father with us are forgotten!

Then there is another tender and merciful order of chastening or discipline, which is more what Paul also had to endure. It is a *preventive discipline, because of a tendency to be puffed up*. The Lord knows our hearts well; who knows them better? and His dealings are suited to the temperament of each, and to the tendency of each to get away from Christ, to which each is most liable. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." His eyes are on them for their good, and the righteous should not withdraw their eyes from Him!

If we turn to Numbers 33, we find the interesting itinerary of the journey, step by step, and stage by stage, marked and registered under God's eye. From Pi-hahiroth to Marah, from Marah to Elim, and from Elim, with its fountains and palm trees, back again to the Red Sea! (vv. 8-10). What do we learn from this? I believe a blessed lesson. We should be able to turn now, without a quiver in our hearts, and calmly survey that death by which we have been delivered — the death of Him who passed through its dark raging flood for us. We can contemplate it as that which silenced every foe; "The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left" (Psalm 106:11).

F. G. Patterson



Scripture Truth

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

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THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE ————— NORMAN GRIFFITHS

1. INTRODUCTION

Are our beliefs about the Lord's coming vague or definite, derivative or based on the Scripture, made personal to us or just part of a residual religious inheritance? This clearly written article forms the first of a series in which the New Testament teaching on "the Christian Hope" will be freshly presented and applied.

The first letter of the apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica is generally accepted to be the earliest of the epistles and was written to an assembly of young Christians, that is, young in the faith. From Acts 17 we learn that the apostle was at Thessalonica for only about three weeks — three Sabbath days, and in that brief period he imparted to them a great range of Christian doctrine — the sufferings of Christ, His resurrection, His Messiahship and His coming again in glory to reign.

In the first chapter of the epistle, he recalls with thanksgiving their response to the gospel he preached to them, the work of faith which led them to turn to God from idols, their labour of love in serving the living and true God, and their patience and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ as they waited for His coming from heaven.

Their hope was centred on the Lord's coming, that is, His appearing in glory, but Paul writes to them because there was one thing that they were not clear about. In chapter 4:13 he says, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep", namely, those who had died. These Christians were waiting for His coming from heaven in glory to reign over the earth. Concerning this Paul says that they had no need for him to write them about the times and seasons (5:1), matters connected with the earth — but that they were ignorant about the heavenly part of His coming. Expecting to take part in the earthly kingdom and its glory, they thought that those who had died already would, therefore, not be present to share in it.

The Lord's coming in glory meant a lot to them — it was their hope (1:3,10). Paul speaks of them as *his* hope — his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming (2:19). Paul's prayer was that the Lord would make them increase and abound in love toward each other and toward all so that their hearts would be confirmed in their perfect suitability before our God and Father at the

coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with *all* His saints (3:13). This “all” is highly significant. They will *all* be with Him when He comes to reign, *all* conformed to His image, having bodies of glory like unto His own glorious body in that day when (as Paul writes in his second letter) He shall come to be “glorified in his saints and admired in *all* them that believe” (2 Thessalonians 1:10). How precious is that little word, “all”! He will not come just for some who were more faithful than others, nor will those who have died miss His glorious appearing. It is quite unthinkable that the Lord, at His appearing in glory, should have only a part of His church with Him, as it were a mutilated body (as some, teaching a “partial rapture” have supposed). *All* will be there, for His own glory, for they are all the fruit of His redemption.

How then would it be brought about that those who had “fallen asleep”, and whose hopes apparently had been dashed, could have part in Christ’s glorious appearing?

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 the apostle writes to comfort their hearts by affirming that God will bring *with* Jesus those who have “fallen asleep” in Jesus, when He comes. We are *not* to sorrow as those who have no hope, for our hope is in the One who died and rose again, the Victor over the grave, over sin and Satan’s power. Then with a special word from the Lord he explains to them how it is that those who “sleep” will be brought *with* Christ. First of all, Christ will come *for* them, and not for them only but also for all those “which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord”. This is the wonderful truth of the “rapture” — the “catching away” of *all* the saints, to be “forever with the Lord”.

Here is the Christian’s hope. It has in view the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Everything is centred in Him whom Paul, in 1 Timothy 1:1, names “our hope”.

With this foundation we shall go on to consider in three further articles the *objective*, the *character*, and the *practical effect* of “the Christian Hope”. Its objective is *heaven* and it is *glory*, as Colossians 1:3-5 and Romans 5:1-2 teach us. In its character it is *living* and it is a *blessed* hope (1 Peter 1:3-5; Titus 2:11-14). In its practical effects it is *purifying* and it is *anchoring* (1 John 3:1-3; Hebrews 6:9-20).

What a good subject we have! Let us betake ourselves to the study of it with zeal, for it is the “God who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2) who opens it out before us!

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE———COLIN CURRY

“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” John 11:25,26

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (He spoke of the temple of His body).” John 2:19,21

Continuing our series on the “I AMs” of John’s Gospel.

The second of these quotations was our Lord’s answer to a request for a sign authorising His recent actions in the temple. In another place He spoke of “the sign of the prophet Jonas”, as the unique and crowning sign to be given to the unbelieving generation around Him. His own resurrection was to be the greatest of all signs. The book of Acts makes it clear that, after Pentecost, the great fact of Christ’s resurrection was the central point of the Christian testimony, and was presented as an open challenge to all hearers. But, leaving aside *that* supremely significant happening, the whole sequence of His mighty actions before He died carries tremendous weight of its own. The raising of Lazarus is the last of those signs which witness to the great Person who was here, as presented by John: and surely it forms an emphatic climax to that sequence, and a real watershed in the course of the story as John relates it. After this great miracle, those close to our Lord were responsive to Him in a new and still deeper way; but the larger group, and their leaders especially, were bending themselves against Him in a more determined way. It precipitated His death; though the chapters show that the pattern of events was really determined and allowed by Himself.

When Paul wrote that our Lord was “declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection of the dead” he had perhaps mainly in mind the raising of Lazarus, and other kindred incidents before His death on the cross (Romans 1:4). Whether or not this was so, it is unquestionable that the resurrection of Lazarus *had* this effect when it was first witnessed (and still, on quiet meditation, *has* this effect). It powerfully affirms the glory of the Son of God, it fills our vision with that One who *is* the Resurrection and the Life. Resurrection ceases to be a vague tenet, a mere item of belief, a distant expectation (Martha thought of it in those terms). Resurrection and Life come closely into our own immediate situation (as they did in the home circle at Bethany that day); they are vital realities, embodied and known in a Person, who *is* (and shows that He *is*) the Resurrection and the Life. Knowing *Him*, and the power of His resurrection, is experience for today as well as hope for the future. Knowing *Him* in this way, in some small sense, creates a strong urge to progress in this experience (see Philippians 3:10). Of course there are aspects of our knowing Him as Resurrection, and as Life, which are yet future. Our bodies will be involved; the dead shall be raised, and the living changed. But there is nothing vague or uncertain about this prospect. It is as sure as He Himself is sure. All is in the hands of One who moves calmly, and in

a totally effective way, in the manner so well depicted in the narrative of this eleventh chapter.

The total *surprise* that came with the main event related here, is a prominent feature (though the Lord Jesus saw the end from the beginning). The deep feeling shown by our Lord, the surpassing *love* which moved Him in this great action, is also stressed. Then the bare *power* of His authoritative word, to which both death and corruption yield their grip, stands out sharply from the record. Finally, the *reactions* to this mighty act form an important element in the passage too.

Surprise

To say that those who observed the raising of Lazarus were taken by surprise must be a substantial understatement. Awe and amazement must have swept over all the witnesses of a sight so unprecedented, and so nearly beyond belief.

All the thoughts expressed about Lazarus before the full climax of the story made the assumption that until he died there was some hope, but from the moment he died there was none. It seems that Martha and Mary shared a confidence in the Lord Jesus that, should He arrive in time, Lazarus's death could be averted. Others too, not so close to Him, observing His manner on the way to the burial-place, also had that feeling. If Jesus had been there in time, Lazarus would not have died. This in itself was no small faith in Him. With the sisters there was a special bond with Him of love and faith. Each sister, though in real distress, separately showed her thankfulness that he had arrived to share in their loss. They welcomed His coming, but understandably each showed her disappointment too. In their minds, the deadline had been passed, the irrevocable had happened. They did not question Him, nor doubt His love in any way. But the sense that it was *too late* for the effective help they had yearned for was to the fore in each of their minds. The hopelessness was perhaps most strongly shown by Martha. When the great climax had almost been reached, with the stone about to be removed, her only thought was of the unpleasantness of what would be uncovered.

Nor could the disciples rise to more than ordinary expectations. If Lazarus was "sleeping" as the Lord had indicated, then he might recover. Perhaps they felt they need not go in that event. But they misunderstood Him, and, when they knew the truth they went with Him faithfully, and with real loyalty, yet in a far from hopeful frame of mind. There was talk of the risk of going to Judaea; Thomas spoke of possible death for them as well as Himself. Death, rather than Resurrection and Life, was for them the much more probable consequence of that journey. For Lazarus it was a certainty already, as He had told them, and they could not see beyond that grim horizon.

Plainly, the whole setting of this great event at Bethany was one of inexpectancy and hopelessness. What a surprising thing is life out of death! How sublime is the display of the glory of God, in the person of the Doer of this highly significant deed.

Love

But there was nothing deliberately sensational about the style of our Lord's action. On the contrary, the moderate and quiet dignity of His manner is clear in the record. Sensitivity marked His whole approach. He carried the whole action through without haste and with a unique fineness and depth of feeling. True, it was an outstanding act, standing alone in its display of power. But also (and this adds immensely to its quality) it was an act of *love*. He was moved by deep concern for the persons and the issues involved; it was done not for self-display, but in the closest of touch with His Father. Love that feels things, and deals with them too, in a way that only divine love can do, underlies all the motions of the Lord Jesus throughout this rare incident, so simply told here.

The message from Bethany telling Him of Lazarus's sickness, showed how aware they were of His love for them. Then John, the writer, reinforces this fact, which underlay all that ensued, by stressing His love for each individual in that home at Bethany. Though a certain mystery surrounds the way in which love acts, and so it must have seemed to Martha and Mary, yet His love for them was deep and real, and was appreciated even more fully in the outcome. Near the end, too, though before the life-giving command was spoken, the love of Jesus for His friend Lazarus (and for the bereaved ones) stood out prominently; so that onlookers were impelled to say "Behold, how He loved him!" The love of Christ, shown when sorrow is at its height, is surely not less a miracle than the word of power which can banish sorrow at a stroke.

Then there were the feelings of our Lord, as He came in close proximity to the place of death and burial, shown delicately yet vividly in the verses. He shared their grief; He stood with them in their loss. He saw the tears, and wept Himself. Not only did He feel *for* them, and *with* them; but He felt with extreme sensitivity the awfulness of what was at the root of their trouble. "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled". Death and corruption lie at the end of the human career, apart from Himself. The starkness of the human plight, the degradation which sin has brought with it, the firm grip of the power which has its hold over mankind, and the sad hopelessness that accompanies these grim facts — all these were in a sense epitomised by that grave at Bethany, and the grief that centred on it. To Him these were massive things, and He felt their weight thoroughly, even though in the power of His love He had the answer to it all. One of the marvels of the love of our Lord is that He knew to the full all that He had to deal with, and that He suffered deeply in the process of lifting us up from the morass and misery in which He found us. Ultimately, at the cross, in marvellous love He not only felt, but carried, that burden in its totality.

Power

Great power in the hands of unfeeling and wrong-headed persons can be frightening in its ways. Both the Bible and general history provide many instances of this. But what a gratifying thing it is to

witness supreme power vested in a Person who alone can use it in an absolutely right way! That Person is our blessed Lord, and all power is in His hands. As we have seen, love motivated Him, and the power of His love cannot be resisted or refuted. But the patent reality of His ability to defeat the strongest of all adverse forces, is shown directly and frankly in the simple eye-witness account given by John. His word is sufficient; His Voice awakens the dead, it gives life, it banishes corruption, it commands obedience. What high thoughts of this all-commanding and all-conquering Person, who is our Lord, are impressed upon us here! The miracle also carried indications of other things of a similar, though not identical, character; all of which are the sovereign work of the great Life-Giver who recalled Lazarus from death. Our very conversion is a sovereign action from our Lord. We pass from death unto life on hearing His word in faith. The dead (spiritually) hear the Voice of the Son of God and, on hearing, they live. We are now speaking of our Lord's all-powerful work *within* us, bringing us into new life with Him. Then also, His future acts of power, affecting our *bodies*, are suggested by this raising of Lazarus. Certainly the same mighty Voice will be heard again then, and the same great power evident. We shall know Him as the Resurrection in the fullest sense. He is well able to do it, just as He is able to subdue all things to Himself (Philippians 3:24). Mortality and corruptibility will be left completely behind then. Unlike Lazarus, we shall not return to the earthly scenes; we shall bear the image of the heavenly (One), in the eternal deathless realms.

Responses

There were adverse responses to our Lord after His revelation of Himself as the Resurrection and the Life. What a commentary on the obtuseness of unbelief, and the animosity of the human heart, is provided by the sight of men shamelessly plotting His *death*, who had restored *life* to Lazarus in such a gracious and matchless way. No matter what else was sacrificed, their own position and status must not be jeopardised.

A point to notice, however, is that while twentieth century persons often doubt New Testament miracles as a matter of course, the attitude of opponents at the time of our Lord strongly validates these happenings. Certainly those who agreed on His early death were aware that something quite astounding had occurred, and they knew the full details. The urgency to destroy Him did not spring from a trivial happening as its cause! His enemies proved the point that modern unbelief can doubt so easily. Something similar is evident in many places in the scriptural accounts. Modern scepticism, still using the Name of Christ, can with a show of erudition speak and write about "the myth of God incarnate". Teachings of *that* kind are considered to be later accretions, fanciful extensions of the basic simple style of Christianity introduced by Christ. The opponents of our Lord in His own day knew differently. They did not misunderstand the key feature of His message. "Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God", they said. The crucifixion was a misunderstanding if *that* was not His central

claim. The real position that He maintained about Himself (in deeds as well as words) is confirmed by the very intensity of their opposition to Him. So it was immediately after His resurrection, too, to quote one more example. The lie that was spread abroad, maligning the disciples as body-stealers, sealed for ever the truth that His tomb was vacant. Unbelief, when suddenly and non-plussed, was obliged to concede half the truth! The attempt a little later to suppress the other great fact, that Christ had risen, also was a measure taken in desperation, and, though they might browbeat the witnesses, it could not succeed in the basic sense. But even the commotion and the opposition, early in the book of Acts, played their part in emphasising that great and undeniable movements from God were afoot. Something really big, and from God, is going on when the enemy shows a strong hand.

But happily there were other reactions to the raising of Lazarus. Martha and Mary, we may be sure, reacted well to it, with a deeply-felt response to their Lord, who had exceeded all that they could have imagined. Lazarus too, by his physical presence, witnessed to the glory and life-giving power of his Lord. How *close* to Him they came, in real experience with Him, during and after the events of those few days. How suitable it seems that they felt a positive response to Him was needed. "They made Him a supper", and each had their part in that concerted activity described in chapter 12. All their desire was to honour Him; and how right it was that each kind of contribution was made. The energy of Martha's response; the peaceful enjoyment of life in the company of our Lord, entered into fully by Lazarus, communing with Him who was the Source of his renewed life; and Mary's outstanding act of devotion, the costly token of her deep sense of His worthiness — how it all combined to form a worthy tribute to Him! Our situation, of course, does not quite agree with theirs. But, if we are Christians at all, we have passed from death to life as a result of His initiative and all-powerful call. We know what true life is, life that is entirely derived from Himself, trusting Him, appreciating Him, and absorbed with Himself. **May** we, in the freshness of that life which has broken into our state of death and hopelessness, live as those that are "alive from the dead" through Jesus Christ our Lord. Industry in work for Him, joy and satisfaction in close communion with Him, and the impulse to give our absolute best to Him, in a devoted worship which is fully absorbed with its Object — these surely are among the desirable marks of a quickened life that knows Him, in experience, to be "the Resurrection and the Life".

FELLOW WORKERS WITH PAUL ————— **T. D. SPICER****9. AQUILA AND PRISCILLA**

Their home cannot have been lavish, for they were always "on the move", yet it was never shut to believers who needed it; the conversation was not trivial, but "instruction in the way of God"; the church itself was glad to meet there. As a result everyone remembered Aquila and Priscilla.

The topic before us in this study is that of Christian marriage, and two of the New Testament writers devote part of their writings to this important subject. When we add what the apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians and Colossians to that which Peter writes in his First Epistle, the result is almost a complete code for married life. Yet there are also some things which we can learn about marriage and a Christian home, especially its place in the Church, which no list of precepts could ever teach; and it is remarkable that in the experience of both these apostles there is a married couple whose conduct is most instructive.

Ananias and Sapphira

Peter, himself married, was involved in the incident of Ananias and Sapphira. To be alone in the commission of deliberate wrong is bad enough; but a far deeper guilt is incurred when there has been collusion before the deed. Moreover when a married couple have conspired, then indeed the act takes on a sombre tone. The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) stands as a warning that a curse instead of a blessing may come upon those whose alliance has been directed towards deceit and falsehood.

The apostle Paul was unmarried and held strongly that it was an advantage to him in his work to be so; and it is with this in mind that we turn to our study of Aquila and Priscilla, or Prisca as she is sometimes called. We find them as the apostle's companions and fellow-workers, and through that relationship serving the whole Church.

Fellow-craftsmen

Their first meeting occurred while the apostle was travelling on his second missionary journey. He had "departed from Athens, and came to Corinth"; and this was at the time when the Emperor Claudius had "commanded all Jews to depart from Rome". Among these Jews, "lately come from Italy" was one of Pontus, "named Aquila . . . with his wife Priscilla" (Acts 18:1-2). Travelling from different directions and impelled by differing motives they doubtless found a common point of contact at the Synagogue. But who would have expected such a meeting at such a time? It may have appeared to be coincidence and yet how often seeming coincidences are none other than God "working His purposes out". Whether Aquila and Priscilla were converted before they met the apostle we cannot tell, but they were certainly true fellow-workers in every sense of the expression for they followed the

same trade as himself, that of tentmakers. The association, however, was not only that of fellow-craftsmen for Aquila and Priscilla became partners with Paul in the work of the Gospel, possibly as those he calls "teachers" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

How good is the Lord and no hard taskmaster, for we must note that this fellowship provided no small comfort to the apostle at a time when it was most surely needed. He had been "left in Athens" on his own; and, in the way in which he mentions it, seems to imply that the time he spent in that profligate city, as well as the early part of his visit to Corinth, was a time of depression and discouragement (1 Thessalonians 3:1). This inference is confirmed by the strong language used in the Acts of the new impulse which his spirit received when Timothy and Silas rejoined him (Acts 17:15 and 18:5). In the Corinthian Epistle he says that in his early days at Corinth there was "fear" and "trembling" and the sense of "weakness" (1 Corinthians 2:3).

Yet, although without any domestic life of his own, the Lord prepared a home for him, that of Aquila and Priscilla. There is no doubt that the fellowship he found there strengthened and encouraged him in his work, and those who have Christian homes may learn from this that one of the better forms of hospitality is to provide sympathy and cheerful company for those who might become depressed in their lonely round of service.

Apollos

Next, we find Paul, in the company of Aquila and Priscilla, moving to Corinth from Ephesus (Acts 18:18). It is possible that business requirements may have taken them across the Aegean Sea and so given the apostle a convenient opportunity to make part of his return journey to Jerusalem in their company, for he had intended to be in Jerusalem for a coming festival. Meanwhile, his two friends stayed in Ephesus to wait for his return. It would seem that one purpose in these arrangements was that they should continue the work of evangelism which had begun, and also make preparations for more systematic work on his return. An opportunity to be of particular help soon occurred, and doubtless the incident of Apollos was only one of many in which their counsel and instruction was given. It has been recorded by Luke as a typical case for our attention.

In a previous study we saw how Apollos profited from his acquaintance with Aquila and Priscilla; now we must notice their concern for the work of the Lord, coupled with their maturity and sound judgement, which made them readily appreciate the capabilities of Apollos. They soon set about the task of fitting him more adequately for his service, and we read that they "taught him more perfectly the way of the Lord" as they too had been instructed by Paul. What part did Priscilla play? Surely it is not without some significance that her name is always mentioned with her husband's and we may well be justified in inferring that her character was the more energetic of the two. In three of the five places where their names occur Priscilla is mentioned before Aquila (Acts 18:18, Romans 16:3, 2 Timothy 4:19).

We can at least infer that they were of one mind and purpose and their service for the Master was a joint venture.

The Church in their House

The apostle Paul now rejoins Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and we make this deduction from the salutation sent by them in the apostle's First Letter to Corinth which was written at Ephesus. Here it is that we first meet that lovely expression, "the Church that is in their house" (1 Corinthians 16:19). It is through this that we are now brought to consider Christian living in the context of the domestic scene.

First century Christians lived in perilous times and we find the hospitality offered by these co-workers on what may well be termed the "heroic" scale. Whether it was in Corinth, Ephesus or Rome, the "house" of Aquila and Priscilla provided more than the comforts of home; it was the recognised place where a local assembly gathered together on the first day of the week in the Name of the Lord. It is well known that in New Testament time no buildings or halls existed uniquely devoted to assembly gatherings. This, and other parallels in Scripture make it clear that the regular gatherings of the Church, centred on the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, took place in the homes of certain believers.

How lovely as well as uniquely important was this particular service of Aquila and Priscilla, in providing a place where those who loved the Lord assembled regularly for all the privileges and responsibilities associated in the New Testament scriptures with the assembly. Thus their home possessed the precious privilege of experiencing the very presence of the Lord Jesus amongst His own gathered in His Name.

From Ephesus Aquila and Priscilla returned to Rome from where they were originally exiled by the Emperor. Why they returned we cannot say, but it would be natural for them to wish to re-visit the city when it was safe to do so. So when the apostle came to write his Letter to the Church there we find that they have first place in a long list of believers who were resident in the city. Once again it is their hospitality that is the subject of comment and commendation (Romans 16:3-5). They are still making their home a refuge for those who confessed Christ and as a means for building up and extending His Church.

Helpers in Christ Jesus

The context of this particular mention of their names also provides some further insight into their character and Christian service. They are said by the apostle not only to have been his "helpers in Christ Jesus", which indeed we have already seen that they were, but to "have for my own life laid down their own necks". This points to some great danger they had run on his behalf. We cannot say where or when this incident took place, but possibly it was in Ephesus where, according to the account in Acts, there was much animosity and antagonism when they were with him in the city (see Acts 19:21 ff). They lived dangerously and in risking their lives they did what our

Lord Himself declared was the highest expression of love (John 15:13). With the recollection of the incident, however, the personal gratitude of the apostle breaks out "to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles". We might also add our own thanks, both for their aid in the spread of the Gospel, and for the example of godly living which they have left for us.

The companionship of these two fellow-workers, tried and strengthened through a variety of experience, continued throughout the apostle's ministry. The last mention of them is some eight years later and is found in the Second Epistle to Timothy; when, shortly before his martyrdom, Paul sends to them a loving salutation — the only one in this Letter — which they share with the "household of Onesiphorus". So it is that the domestic aspect of Christian life is made doubly conspicuous and attractive at the very close of the apostle's career.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS ————— E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

2 Peter 1:1-11

Are you growing? As a Christian, you are either making progress, or backsliding. There is no middle point.

In the last verse of his second Epistle Peter tells us: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (N.I.V.). This is the theme of the verses we are to consider.

A command to *grow*. How do we set about obeying it? All growth, natural and spiritual, is dependent upon divine power; every gardener knows that all he can do to make his plants grow is to provide the best conditions. So here is a divine command, and with it in chapter 1:3 we get the assurance that God has provided the means of growth: "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 to glory and virtue." Finally the conditions of growth are plainly set out in the following verses (5-9).

Moreover, as always, at the outset God sets before us His ultimate purpose: those exceeding great and precious promises which we know so well are designed to make us partakers of the divine nature — a stupendous statement indeed. Not, let us note, partakers of the divine being, but of His nature, of that holiness and grace and love of which the Lord Jesus was the perfect exponent. As another scripture tells us, we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

We must notice what Peter adds, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust". True conversion to God has to start here. When we are born again, born of water and the Spirit, through obedience to God's word, we are cleansed from that corruption. The water is a symbol of that word of God which cleanses us — cleanses us morally at the same time as our guilt is cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. But tolerance of such corruption among professing Christ-

ians is one of those things which this epistle was written to forestall.

Conditions of growth

“And besides this” (verse 5) should rather read, “For this very reason”. Peter is not introducing something extra, but is going to elaborate what he has said in verse 4. He continues, “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance”, and so on.

Can it be that Peter is telling us that faith alone is not sufficient for salvation, but that our own achievements must be added to it? Certainly not! For it is not faith in itself that saves, but the fact of resting in faith on the work of Christ, and that work has far more in view than just saving us from wrath. For having met us in our lost and ruined state, the slaves of sin and Satan, our Saviour has redeemed us, setting us free that we might be His own people, living for Him, to become eventually, in Peter’s phrase, partakers of the divine nature. Let us then enlarge our view of faith.

Peter says, “*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue*”. The word means, not so much “adding to” as “filling out with” virtue — with vigour and excellence, strength and courage. We have come to a mighty Saviour, and our faith must take hold of His divine power, by which He is able to impart to us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness”. Whatever His word commands He will give us strength to do, if we ask Him. Our aim must be to grow in the grace and knowledge of Himself, and this needs diligence — a word that Peter repeats in verse 10 and again in 3:14.

“*And to virtue add knowledge.*” Faith in the Lord Jesus introduces us into a new world, a world where God is real, and no longer shadowy; where Christian values must prevail, instead of worldly ones. These Christian values we need to learn. We need then knowledge of God and of what is pleasing to Him; knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His ways of grace and love and gentleness; knowledge of the Bible and of God’s purposes — enough here surely to enrich our souls and enlarge our faith. This too calls for diligence. We shall not acquire such knowledge automatically.

“*And to knowledge temperance,*” literally, “*self control*”. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 we find Paul comparing the Christian life to one of the Olympic contests of his day. He says, “Every man that striveth for the mastery [e.g. in wrestling] is temperate in all things”. That is, he goes into training, observing strict rules, not as a duty, but as a practical step toward success. The Christian’s task is to ensure that his old, corrupt nature does not regain the hold it once had, and for this he has the “precious promise” of victory through the Holy Spirit — “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

Walking in the Spirit is assisted by regular reading of the Bible, and meditation upon it; by prayer, setting aside times for this, so that

it is not hurried; and cultivating a spirit of waiting upon the Lord to make plain His will. A fixed resolve to place His interests first, whatever natural inclination might otherwise suggest, is more than half the battle. Of course, self control is needed to maintain these things, and while the need for relaxation is undeniable, the excitements of a pleasure-crazed world are best avoided. Are not the age-old beauties of God's creation, enjoyed in communion with Him, a better refreshment? But we must not make rules for one another; let every man be persuaded in his own mind.

“And to temperance patience.” The word includes, not only putting up with difficult or unpleasant things, but perseverance. It is so easy to begin well, but if our self mastery is to achieve any lasting result, perseverance is essential. The words of Hebrews 12 point to the source of power for this: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of faith”. And every day brings us nearer to our goal.

“And to perseverance godliness.” That is, bringing everything to the test of God's will. Self control must not be allowed to degenerate into self will, nor perseverance into obstinacy. By humbly seeking to do God's will we shall be brought nearer to partaking of His nature. Growing in knowledge is important, as we have seen, and knowledge of God's will is immensely helped by trying to do it.

“And to godliness brotherly kindness.” This is a most important addition to godliness, because our actions affect our brethren, who are seeking to walk in the same path. And if differences arise between us, a kind and helpful spirit is so much better than the carping criticism which sometimes does duty for godliness. True godliness necessitates self judgment, and this makes us less likely to judge others. To walk the Christian path we need all the encouragement we can get, and this, brotherly kindness helps to supply.

“And to brotherly kindness love.” Love, of the divine sort, acts outside all relationship and all deserving, in the power of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this we must have, if we are to be like Him; this we can only acquire by following Him closely, for it is so contrary to the natural thoughts of man. Peter puts it last, as the crown of all the virtues, just as Paul puts it first, as the most important of all, but we can learn from this that these additions to faith are not to be added in a gradual progression as our Christian life matures: we need them all, all the time. But we need them in increasing measure — “abounding” is Peter's word in verse 8, and this is where maturity comes in. This will make us, he says, to be neither ineffective nor unproductive (N.I.V.) in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God wants our faith to be a working faith, a fruitful faith, a faith that will transform our lives.

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar

off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins". This is a dreadful picture of a Christian who, not having been diligent to go forward, is slipping back fast. His vision is confined to the things about him — troubles, worries, faults of others, and so on. The thought of Christ and His glory has faded; His coming is no longer looked for; the joy of deliverance from his sins has faded. With this his own sinfulness is forgotten, his forgiveness is forgotten, his love for the Lord Jesus is in danger of perishing.

Peter writes to warn any who might be in such a condition, but we all can profit from his admonition. If a man did not heed it, he might fall into even greater danger, which we find in chapter 2 verse 20. So Peter concludes, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall."

Does not this remind us of Jude's exhortation to build up ourselves on our most holy faith, etc. (verses 20, 21), which is followed by the words, "Unto him who is able to keep you from falling" (verse 24)? God will keep us from falling, but we must build ourselves up. Peter's words likewise provide an excellent example of that important truth, that where spiritual blessing is concerned, our response in obedience and faith is as necessary as God's gracious working on our behalf. And in regard to election, God's choice of anyone before the foundation of the world is demonstrated now by this response, and it cannot be known otherwise. We can make it more sure by a more diligent obedience, seeking always to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "For thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you" (verse 11, N.Trans. of J.N.D.). "To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

OBSERVATIONS

A CHANGE IN TEMPER

Christianity in the West is on the march again. Estimates of the number of "born again" Christians in the USA seem to vary between sixteen and thirty millions. Moral Majority, one of the political manifestations of this movement, was a significant force in the campaign to elect President Reagan. A State law in Arkansas, currently being challenged in the courts, compels schools to offer equal instruction in "creationism" and evolution.

In our own country, church attendances, which had been falling for more than three-quarters of a century, have begun to edge up again. In the vanguard of this recovery is evangelical, not liberal or ritualistic, Christianity. But if the churches are recovering, they themselves are also under severe competition from the so-called "house church" movement composed of those, mainly "charismatic", believers who have abandoned what they call the "institutional" church in favour of direct attempts to re-create the experience of the

original Church after Pentecost in their own homes, with spontaneous praise and worship meetings, prophecy and prayer meetings. Tens of thousands of believers are alleged to belong now to such house fellowships.

The engine of this remarkable evangelical recovery appears to me to have been a double one. Firstly, the "Christian Union" movement in schools, colleges, workplaces, carefully nurtured for decades by umbrella organisations such as Scripture Union, UCCF (IVF). One must admire the faithfulness of men like Oliver Barclay and John Stott, both associated with UCCF, which is now yielding so rich a harvest, not least in the steady flow of evangelical ordinands, who now occupy so many pulpits.

The second "engine of growth" has been the so-called "charismatic" movement, originating in the mid-sixties. Whereas the SU/UCCF revival favoured an organisational and intellectual type of Christianity, this movement appealed to the emotions, and its growth was spontaneous.

But together, these two "engines of growth" have not only stimulated the numerical recovery of evangelicalism; they have also significantly changed its character.

Firstly, they have affected evangelicalism's attitude to the Bible. They have destroyed the older fundamentalist consensus. The intellectual side of the SU/UCCF movement has sought admission to the academic world of biblical and theological scholarship, and to gain it has had to accept the terms on which that "profession" operates — namely rationalist presuppositions about the Scriptures*. Meanwhile the "charismatics" are emphasising the primacy of feelings and experience in place of the primacy of the divine testimony of Scripture. The older "pentecostals" were mainly fundamentalist, but many of the newer "charismatics" have found it possible to jettison this belief as an encumbrance. Rationalist scholars have found in it a source of "renewal" which their studies could not yield, yet one which in no way conflicted with the rationalist basis of these studies.

Fundamentalism remains strong in evangelicalism. But it no longer defines and dominates it. It is surprising how many people are blind to this change, though a glance at the stocks of any SU bookshop would confirm it.

Secondly, the attitude of evangelicalism to Roman Catholicism has changed. This is most true of "charismatics", such as David Watson of York. But space forbids elaboration.

Thirdly, the attitude of evangelicalism to the world has changed. On a personal level, the firm belief of Wesley, Newton, Wilberforce, and other leaders of the first evangelical revival, that the Christian is only a stranger here, a citizen of heaven, who ought to hold himself apart from the artificial, cheapening, distracting, pleasures of this age, has been very greatly weakened. Instead, Christians are being urged to "involve" themselves in the whole range of cultural and recreational activity of the day. At the same time, the reluctance of Christians to

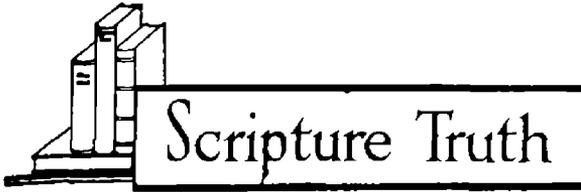
* For details, see Harold Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*.

participate in political action has been transformed into its active espousal, claiming the same Wilberforce as a model whose personal advice is rejected (whether Wilberforce and Shaftesbury, those old Tory patricians, would at all have approved of modern plebeian political initiatives is a question the current myth finds no place for). The "evangelical ghetto" and evangelical "pietism" are ridiculed now; yet this ridicule seems most unfair to those generations which earlier in the century produced so many thousands of selfless, career-abandoning missionaries.

Fourthly, the new evangelicalism lays the emphasis on this present life; the older evangelicalism laid the emphasis on that which is to come. As with most of these changes, this one has come gradually, but no reader of old evangelical literature could possibly doubt that it is so. The present-day world does not believe in the life to come, and maybe it is fruitless, when preaching to it, to begin by assuming consequences in that life, which to it is an idle tale. Yet the way the gospel is heard largely determines the character of the Christianity that develops afterwards. The "charismatic" emphasis on the relief of "burdens", i.e. of the tensions of living, especially tensions in relationships, makes Christianity to revolve round the problems of the age rather than raising Christians beyond it. Bishop Ryle correctly stated the mode of this elevation when he said that a right knowledge of God depends on a right knowledge of *sin*. This is true, not only at the start of the Christian life, but at every stage of its growth, for God's purpose is to make us His *righteousness*. Along with this goes another change. The preaching of the first evangelical revival was the preaching of the cross. The emphasis of this second evangelical revival is rather that "Jesus is alive". I am not sure that this really is more faithful to the Acts of the Apostles. Without the consciousness that as humans our controversy is with GOD, and that it is a moral one, Christianity loses the dimension of eternity.

Fifthly, the evangelical attitude to the Church has changed. For one thing, the convenient evangelical belief in "the invisible church" is in retreat, as an older individualism gives way to a more modern consciousness of *community*. At the same time, the polemic of "brethren" against the "one-man ministry" appears to be obsolete, for nobody else will admit to believing in it either. Concepts such as "body ministry" have replaced it, deriving again from the charismatic emphasis on the "gifts". Have they really adopted those views that propelled "brethren, commonly so-called"? I am far from convinced. But to many young people brought up amongst "brethren" it appears as if *they* practise what *we* only preach.

If much has changed, much remains the same. The devotion to the Person of the Lord Jesus, and to the truths concerning His person show that evangelicalism remains evangelicalism still. It never was a homogeneous movement. It is less so now than ever. Taken in general, however, *its temper has changed*. And while we ought to be sincerely happy to see the word of God bearing fruit and growing, insofar as it is, we ought to be alive to the change in temper too.



(incorporating *Words of Help*)

MARCH, 1982

THE SON OF THE FATHER* _____ COLIN CURRY

“The only-begotten Son . . . is in the bosom of the Father” John 1:18.

“His [God’s] Son . . . by whom also he made the worlds” Hebrews 1:2.

“He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” 1 John 2:22.

The truth of the eternal Sonship of Christ is “the key to the recognition of the kind of love that God has shown to us”. This recognition may linger awhile in the consciousness of those who deny this truth, but they can no longer base it on Scripture. Pressing this issue is not hairsplitting. We urge all readers, especially those who have not thought about the matter, or who want to ignore it, to study this article.

The expressions *the eternal Son*, *the eternal Word*, and *the Trinity*, do not appear in Scripture; and Scriptural words are of course better than human terms. But it may nevertheless be asked: Do these expressions mislead us, or do they (as those who use them believe) refer to vital truths? Are they present *in substance* in Scripture, though the exact words are not used? Are these matters important, and why? Can a serious Christian be uncommitted about such issues? This paper centres principally on the first of these expressions, though it will have some bearing on the others also.

A word to readers seems appropriate first. Some will *welcome* a brief but (as far as possible) clear statement of the truth of the eternal Sonship and its importance: others, however, may react differently. Of these, some, though not disposed to query it, may tend to give it *scant attention*, thinking that only empty doctrinal distinctions are being made here. Others again, wish to be *uncommitted* about our Lord’s Sonship from eternity. From a background of denial of that truth, they have moved over to unsureness about it, and in effect are clinging to an “agnostic” position on the issue. Others *oppose* this truth: perhaps only a few of these would open a periodical such as this, or re-open their minds to Scripture on the matter. But to *all* readers we say that Scripture treats our present theme as crucial; and the whole character and essence of the true revelation of God in Christ is lost if the Scriptural emphasis on His timeless Sonship is not accepted. Pressing this issue is not intolerance, nor hair-splitting either; it *needs* to be

* See 2 John 3.

done since it is the key to the recognition of the kind of love that God has shown to us. We therefore ask for patience and co-operation by all readers in following this paper through to the end, where the high importance of this truth is again stressed. We begin, however, with direct attention to Scripture on the matter.

A prime requirement is caution and delicacy in our approach. The truth concerning the Person of Christ is a high and holy theme, which is certainly far beyond our full grasping. We must discuss it with "reverence and godly fear", and the purely mental approach must be avoided. A total humility and open-ness before Scripture is essential, together with a reliance on the Holy Spirit, who alone can reveal Christ to us. We have no understanding at all, nor any spiritual judgments, unless they are given to us of God. Nevertheless, our awareness that this is a profound theme must not make us unready to receive clear statements of Scripture about it. On this matter, as on any other, Scripture must be accepted at its face value. These are areas where deception can often wear the disguise of "a better understanding", or "the spiritual view", and a constant look-out for such deception is pressed upon us in Scripture. Vagueness, or attempted neutrality, on clear issues is a form of disloyalty to Scripture.

There *are* plain statements in Scripture on this vital matter; and we aim to underline a selection of them. First, the prologue to John's Gospel (1:1-18) is considered. Particular attention is drawn to the following feature of this passage. Timeless facts are stated in several of the verses; yet also, side-by-side with these statements, are other statements which do have a time element, a beginning in time, in them. The sharp distinction between these two kinds of assertions stands out starkly in the text, and has definite instruction in it regarding the essential underived *being* of the Son of the Father. It is in total contrast to things that *came into being*, to which the verses also refer. This is not a construction on the text, it is *in* the text itself. Secondly, we shall select a few more plain passages which leave the matter beyond doubt, together with some other sentences which, on a simple reading, assert the timeless Sonship of Christ. Some distortion of these statements, which handles them with ingenuity rather than simplicity, is, it is suggested, the only way in which that great truth can be avoided in the light of them. Thirdly, in a concluding section, we consider what depends on this truth. Why is it vital? How serious is it to deny it? It will be noticed that the three opening quotations at the head of this paper are, in turn, specially apposite to the three sections now to ensue.

The Opening of the Gospel of John

The verbs *to be* and *to become* are distinct in the Greek of the New Testament; and in the opening passage of John's Gospel each of these different verbs is used several times. It is quite plain that John does not use words loosely: and here in particular, under the Spirit of God, he is careful and precise in his choice between these verbs. In the Authorised Version, much that depends on their difference is preserved; though the best of translations cannot match the basic

text in the sharpness of these distinctions.

To make the point clearer, compare verses 1 and 2 with verse 3. The word 'was' appears four times in verses 1 and 2. Here is the imperfect tense of the verb 'to be'. The meaning is: *was in existence, was [then] in being*, in an enduring way. Verse 3, on the other hand, uses 'was made' (in the A.V.). Here is the other verb, 'to become', 'to come into being'. "All things *came into being* through Him . . ." would be a more explicit translation; and the same verb is used twice more in the verse. The distinction is plain. Creation *had a beginning, began to be, came into existence*, through the action of 'the Word'; but the Word *was*, timeless in being (outside of creation, outside all things that ever began to be). Verse 1 not only asserts the uncreated existence of the Word, but also an eternal 'alongsidedness' *with* God (not in co-existence only, but in active relationship and intercourse) in that life outside of time. The close of the verse adds another grand statement. It stresses the full *Deity* of this One whose kind of being has no beginning and no end. We have used the adjective 'eternal' a few lines above. While it does not appear in the text, to say that our Lord is 'the eternal Word' is to say what these two verses imply; indeed it is part of the meaning that they carry. If for strict accuracy the word 'eternal' is not used, let not the truth of it be abandoned.

Now proceed down the verses. The timeless verb describes the *life*, and the *light*, proper to (and inherently resident in) the great Person at the centre of these verses. See verses 4a, 9a. Life and light subsist in Him, though they had their manifestation to men in time. The *love* too, and the *relationships*, which belong to the uncreated realm (where He belongs) are also put in timeless terms in verse 18. (The word is no longer *was*, but *is*, in that verse; but it equally clearly denotes what is outside of time: we shall return to this verse). It is true, of course, that the *disclosure* of these things (life, light and love) had its beginning, but they themselves had none.

The other verb, 'to become', is used wherever something that *started* is described. All things *came into being* (v. 3), the world *came into being* (v. 10). John the Baptist *came into being* (opening of verse 6: "there *arose* (Began to be) a man sent from God . . ."). Those who received Christ were given authority *to become* children of God (i.e., they were not that before) (v. 12). Then, outstandingly, in one of the most magnificent pronouncements of all, "the Word *became* flesh, and dwelt among us" (v. 14). He who *was*, essentially and timelessly, God, *became* Man. There was no change nor cessation of what He *was*; but He (additionally) entered into perfect Manhood, *commencing* on a life in flesh that had not been before. The fact described surpasses comprehension, and a spirit of adoration is our proper response to it. But the statement itself is unambiguous, and requires simple acceptance. Then, later still (v. 17) are the words "grace and truth *came into being* by Jesus Christ". These things *began* (and continued) to be demonstrated, in the Person then incarnate. Verse 15 is a parenthesis, but is interesting in that John the Baptist uses both the verbs we have been considering. "He that comes after me has *come to be* preferred before me: for He *was* before me" would point up the

two different verbs. Though after John as to date (in His birth and ministry), Jesus took the prior place (in dignity and pre-eminence), here in the earthly scene, owing to His eternal pre-existence.

Verse 18 is in a sense the principal verse for the purpose of this paper. It speaks, at the close, of something that *has* occurred, once and for all, at a certain stage in time. The only-begotten Son *has declared* the Father. Long years elapsed before that disclosure was made; but “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son” to reveal Himself in that way. *The disclosure* had its own limited epoch in time; it certainly *began* to take place (and was completed too), but *not so the thing disclosed*. *Reality* about God, quite apart from the created time-scene of its manifestation, has been brought out into the open by the Son of the Father. The verse quite distinctly emphasises both these facts; the point-in-time nature of the declaration and the timelessness of what was declared.

It is of the utmost moment to see that John, under the Holy Spirit, and in a context where these distinctions are being made again and again, has no use for the verb “to become”, but carefully selects the word “is” when he asserts that “the only-begotten Son *is* in the bosom of the Father”. He uses the present participle of the timeless verb. Literally, it is “*the One being* in the bosom . . .”. There was no commencement to *that*! Nor any discontinuity either. The Declarer of the Father is that unique One, the Son, the special object of His love, who knows Him well, knows Him from eternity, and who has His own part in that holy and endless mutual love that belongs to “another country” altogether than the created one. The relationship between the Father and the Son, and the love within that bond, are *timeless* in character; though, astonishing as it is, *such* a love has not held back from demonstrating its quality, grasping creatures of time and bringing them within its fulness.

Let us draw back a little, in adoration and holy fear, so that the immensity of the content of this verse may deeply impress us. The mystery, the unsearched fulness of what is covered by “the bosom of the Father”, the unique excellence of “the only begotten Son” who dwells there, are vast things, far beyond our compass. The Scriptural words mean far more than we can fully understand, or express. They mean more, but they certainly do not mean less, than what is covered by the expression “*the eternal Son*”.*

Further Passages

Passing now beyond the opening of John’s Gospel, we move first to a selection of further passages which are highly explicit on the matter under discussion. God’s Son is the Maker of the worlds, according to Hebrews 1:2. Can the implications of this be avoided? Can it possibly be held to say that He who made the worlds later became the Son? Colossians 1:12-16 is just as clear: The Son of the Father’s love is

*Let those that will not use expressions because of their absence (in exact form) in Scripture be *consistent*. It will involve dropping a number of their own expressions; ‘absolute deity’, ‘divine persons’, and many more. If extra-Scriptural words are *necessarily* invalid, these are included.

the One by whom all things, of whatever kind, were created. He is antecedent to creation, and higher in rank too, before and above all created things.

Then, Hebrews 5:8 is patently clear on the issue. "Son though He was, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered". He *was* a Son; "He *continued still* a Son" (B. B. Warfield; a very fair elucidation of the phrase). What was new to Him "in the days of His flesh" was *not* Sonship, but the experience of being in the place of obedience. Hebrews 7:1-3 carries the same truth in a different way. Melchisedec was "made like unto the Son of God". The point is that Melchisedec, *as he appears in the Genesis record*, provides a suitable picture of the Son of God. Descent, ancestors, earthly parentage, beginning of days, end of life, would (if recorded) have spoilt the likeness: and so these features of the Melchisedec story do not appear, under the inspiration which controlled the very words of Scripture. But mark well what this really says. Beginning of days and end of life cannot be attached to the Son of God. Only bland sophistry could evade what these Scriptures say so plainly.

Another sizeable group of passages, read simply, points the same way. We have already quoted "God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4): these are simple words, like many others, of which a small sample is now given. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son . . ." (John 3:16). "God sent His only-begotten Son into the world . . ."; "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:9, 14). The choice available of such Scriptures is wide. The *action* of the Son in coming, in unison and co-operation with the Father who sent Him, is clear in several passages of this kind. His coming was a "coming forth", and a "coming into" the world. The Son, addressing the Father, says of the disciples "they . . . have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). To the disciples He says "Ye . . . have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:27, 28). Again, to a hostile audience, "I proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42). Do not these quotations, and a host of similar ones, say that the One who came, and the One who sent Him, were Son and Father, *before*, as well as throughout and after, the fulfilment of that great mission? "The Father sent the Son . . . it is what each were, the Sender and the Sent. I know of nothing previous to this" writes J. N. Darby. Surely these quotations cannot be held to say that the One sent only became the Son at the incarnation, or later. It cannot mean that the "sending" followed the incarnation, that He was sent about as Man, since not a few of these statements say plainly that a sending *into* the world is in mind. To quote one more of these verses, how clearly John 3:17 says that He, the Son, was sent *into* the world, though the main point is that the action was not intended to being condemnation, but rather salvation, as its outcome. The "perspicuity" of Scripture must be respected: its most obvious meaning should be received, and more complicated versions of its meaning strongly suspected.

Other Scriptures, of a different kind, ought not to be ignored. Chief among these are "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: *therefore* . . . that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35); and, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalm 2:7, quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and a few other places). First, it is clear that these verses cannot cancel the whole weight of the testimony of our earlier-quoted verses: i.e. that Christ is *the Son*, ever and uniquely within the Father's love, before the worlds were made; and (plainly) before the incarnation too. The present verses, however, relate to the birth of the Saviour: the first clearly does so, and it seems that the second also, wherever it is cited, focuses on that moment. "Son of God" is a fitting designation of the One born of the virgin. The angel's words to Mary argue that "the Son of God" will be an appropriate title for Him here in Manhood *because* of the profound and thoroughly supernatural nature of His birth. The verse says nothing about other senses in which the high and excellent Name of 'Son' belongs to Him. It does not pronounce on this. But the passage in Hebrews 1 surely does so. "Thou art my Son" is a fitting salutation from Jehovah Himself to signalise the supremacy of Him who (though Son from all eternity) as Son born here in Manhood, has additional high entitlement to the Name more excellent than all others. The writer to the Hebrews cannot be contradicting himself, and, as he adds more quotations, he includes others which (he says explicitly) were addressed to *the Son*. One of these speaks of Him laying the foundation of the earth; and another addresses Him as God, yet also speaks of His "fellows", though He is "above" them. Let us marvel at these truths, as we find them in Scripture. Ever and ceaselessly *the Son*, the *only-begotten Son*, He became *Son in Manhood* (*very God* nevertheless, — *Son of God* implies this), so that others, from the human race, might be brought into association with Him through His death. *Only-begotten Son* bespeaks His utterly unique glory; He stands alone, and ever stood alone, in that communion of love with the Father which is timeless in character. *First-born Son* envisages others to follow, companions, many brethren, many sons being brought to glory, the product of His action on their behalf. First of many stands in a *special* place among them; only one is first: and so it is with our Lord. He has the pre-eminence, and the primacy in all respects. The "more excellent Name" of *Son* encompasses much: and the glory that attaches to Him, in His Person and in His accomplishments, is essentially His alone.

Important Truth

Is this Scriptural teaching important? Does it really matter? The apostle John clearly thinks so. In the Gospel he brings it out in its fulness; in his Epistles he warns in strong terms against losing it, belittling its importance, denying it. The apostle who reflects most strongly the love of God takes on a sterner mien when crucial matters, central to the whole truth, are being impugned. This, surely, must press on us the need to take this matter seriously. The fact that John stresses these matters shows how early they were being denied. Modern oppon-

ents of these truths assume a kind of spiritual elitism, and dress up their teachings well. But their "new light" partakes of the same character as late first-century heresy; and Scripture, through John, still urges us to abide in "that which was from the beginning". The real humanity of the Lord Jesus was questioned too in early Christian times, and John insists on it as another foundational feature of the true faith. But there is no doubt that he warns strongly against denial of "the Father and the Son". In the Gospel he brings out the excellence of the relationship inferred in that phrase, as *exhibited here in time*; and only Scriptural words are able to describe the quality of that bond between the Father and the Son, as it was displayed. But he is at pains too to show that "Father" and "Son" bespeaks eternal, continuing, and necessary relations, and are not designations adopted from the time of the incarnation. Several of His passages, and others elsewhere, are (as we have seen) intractable to any other understanding.

The Father was revealed in the Son. The word revelation means "uncovering" or "removal of the veil". What was (to that point) unseen, did *not* come into *being*, but came into *sight*, with that revelation. The kind and character of the divine love which is so openly on the face of the New Testament, displayed in all its amazing quality at the Cross, is the love that belongs to the eternal realm: it is timeless, fadeless love, the Father's love for the Son, and the Son's for the Father. It is the atmosphere of heaven, the native element of eternity; and part of its nature has been its overflow towards people like ourselves, having no claim on it, yet destined to be with Him where He belongs, in the Father's home of love, for evermore.

We draw to a close with one more firm statement: "Thou (the Father) lovedst me (the Son) before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Love, such as exists in that bond, stands inviolate and unshakeable, outside of and aback of all scenes of time and change, and nothing lies outside its control. The eternal bond of love between the Father and the Son is a matter of *bedrock reality*, supreme in its importance; it lies at the heart of all else that ever was or will be in the created order of things, and indeed beyond it. The Person of *the Son*, the Son of the Father's love, is the One "by Whom all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). The truth of His eternal Person is the Keystone of all else. Can anyone really believe that there is no loss in abandoning this?

We appeal to those who accept the truth outlined in this paper to cling to it firmly, and to enter into the spirit which contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Above all, let us not fail to experience now in some measure the kind of love that has issued from the eternal realm, and will soon welcome us there in the fullest sense.

To other readers who may have been taught otherwise than this article stresses, we make a different appeal. Let Scripture be the arbiter on these issues, and let not other things (the mould of our upbringing, teachers we have respected) deter us from acceptance of Scriptural teaching alone. This article has sought to stay with Scripture, and to import no constructions of our own into the

discussion. That, with the Holy Spirit's help, is essential if the truth is to be received. Finally, let us not "sit on the fence" in the face of so vital an issue. Due honour to our Lord requires more than neutrality.

THE WORLD _____ T. TYSON

1. DOES IT MATTER WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT CREATION?

The intention in this and the following five articles is to study various aspects of what the Bible means by "the World". Specifically, we shall take up the following subjects:

1. *Creation — does it really matter what we believe about "Creation"?*
2. *The three main Bible meanings of "The World".*
3. *The World outside us — Persecution and trial.*
4. *The World within us — Temptation to worldliness.*
5. *Overcoming the World.*
6. *The end of the World.*

It is not intended to deal with the Creation versus Evolution controversy as such, but to examine the vital place that the revelation of God as Creator holds within the total Biblical revelation.

Let us briefly remind ourselves what the Bible says. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Nine times in chapter 1 of Genesis we find "God said". It was an historical, unique act of divine power.

"All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Here we see that it was through the Son that the Godhead worked in Creation.

His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds [ages] (Hebrews 1:2). "Thou Lord in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of thy hands" (Hebrews 1:10). These verses go on to speak not only of creation of the earth, but of the disposal of it when it has fulfilled His purpose — both acts are impossible to science.

God not only made the world, but is now active in it. If we refuse to accept the Genesis record as a literal account of the origin of the physical universe and of man, we — (1) deny to God His glory as Creator, (2) deny the fundamental need of man, (3) deny the word of Christ, (4) deny the authority of the written Word. Let us consider each of these in turn.

(1) We deny to God His glory as Creator

Consider such verses as — Psalm 8:1. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens." Psalm 19:1. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." Psalm 24:1 & 2. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon

the floods.” Isaiah 40:28. “Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary.” None of these passages, nor hundreds of others, has any relevance if God is deposed as Creator. Romans 1:19-25 shows the awful results then, and now, of such a denial of God’s glory.

(2) We deny man’s need

His need to recognise his responsibility to his Creator. His need of security in the knowledge of the care and purpose of his Creator.

Responsibility. Many scriptures clearly declare God’s right to decree the conduct required of His creature, man. Ecclesiastes 12:1. “Remember now thy creator.” Ecclesiastes 12:13. “Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man.” Romans 2:6. “God . . . who will render to every man according to his deeds.” (But on what basis if He is not Creator?) Psalm 119:73. “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.” Acts 17:24. “God that made the world and all things”, v. 30 “Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent”, c

Security. If man has no sense of a relationship to a Creator, he is just a meaningless speck in a meaningless mass of material. Today many are floundering in a vast cosmic ocean where all the marker lights of God’s revelation have been obscured by atheistic science and liberal theology. 1 Peter 1:24, 25. All flesh is like grass and the glory of man like the flower of grass. The grass withereth and its flower falleth away. . . . *But* the word of the Lord endureth for ever. See also Psalm 103:13-17.

Alongside the denial of God as Creator goes a denial of the Scriptural assertion that man has *fallen* from the dignity that God placed on him. Therefore there is no need of a saviour or salvation, and no fear of judgement. Man becomes his own “saviour” in his own eyes, and God is dispensed with. The results are spelled out in Romans 1, and the final result of this attitude will lead to the awful judgements of Revelation and other prophecies — judgements which fall on a God-rejecting world and its head, the man of sin.

(3) We deny the word of Christ

While there are not many references to the Lord speaking of Creation, there are many recorded quotations of His from later chapters of Genesis. Yet if there was only one statement of the Lord which we could prove to be an error, then Christ is no longer to be fully trusted. We have lost our Saviour. Hence the immense issue at stake.

Matthew 19:4. “Have ye not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female?” Note the implications of this verse — a personal Creator. *He* made them — applying only to two individuals, male and female — at the beginning — a precise historical event — male and female, that is, they were created directly into this highest order of the “animal” creation (lower forms do not have male and female). Mark 10:6. “But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female.” Mark 13:19. “In those days shall be

affliction such as was not from the beginning of *the creation which God created* unto this time”.

(4) We deny the Authority of the Word of God

We give a brief outline of New Testament teachings in some way linked with Creation.

- (a) Concerning the Person of Christ.
 - His deity. John 1:1-4.
 - His Pre-eminence. Colossians 1:15-18.
 - His Headship both in Creation and to the Assembly. Colossians 1:18.
 - His work of redemption. 1 Peter 1:20, Hebrews 9:26, Revelation 13:8.
 - His Father's love. John 17:24.
- (b) Our election and blessing. Ephesians 1:4, Titus 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:9.
- (c) The mystery of the Church. Ephesians 3:9.
- (d) Faith. Hebrews 11:2.
- (e) Resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:21 & 22.
- (f) Coming Judgement. 2 Peter 3:4 & 5.
- (g) Kingdom Rewards. Matthew 25:34.
- (h) The place of woman in the assembly. 1 Timothy 2:12-14, 1 Corinthians 11:9.

In view of the subtle suggestions and assertions of the evolutionists which are almost universally accepted in our schools, colleges and universities, let us, for our children's sakes and for our own sakes, faithfully and fearlessly proclaim the Bible teaching that, in the beginning *God created* the heavens and the earth. To give way on this point puts us in danger of losing the whole truth.

THE LORD'S COMING IN 2 PETER ——— JOHN BARNES

To Peter, the study of the prophetic word was anything but abstract or speculative. It was the "light that shineth in a dark place, to which ye do well that ye take heed".

This is the sequel to an article which appeared in May 1980, which those who can might profitably consult.

This epistle warns its readers to beware of false teaching. Peter, calling to mind Israel's experience, remembered the false prophets who plagued the nation and whom they followed blindly into disaster, and he equates the false teachers of the Christian period with them. Our studies relate particularly to the subject of the Lord's return, and we are shown in this letter how, in spite of their wrong teachings, the Lord's coming will affect the ungodly. The fact is that lies do not send the truth away; it remains, solid and inescapable.

Apart from simply ignoring prophecy, the people of Israel treated

it in at least two other ways. Firstly, they relegated its fulfillment to an age so remote that they judged it did not concern them at all. "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth," and again, "He prophesieth of the times that are afar off" (Ezekiel 12:22-28). Or, secondly, they heaped to themselves false prophets to tickle their itching ears with the lies they wished to hear instead of the unpalatable truth; "saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace", and again, "strengthened the hands of the wicked by promising him life" (Ezekiel 13:10, 22).

A prominent feature of these two epistles is that God governs. The false teachers referred to in 2 Peter are said to despise government. Whatever disguise they may assume, they are such as wish to cast off God's control of their lives, which was pretty much the policy of Israel's false prophets. That they deceive themselves is undeniable; they are "willingly ignorant". It is not simply that they do not know. The ignorance of these men is wilful; they do not want to know. It is sad that they should succeed in leading others, often the simple, astray, to their great damage. These people who promised others liberty in their system were, themselves, slaves of corruption.

It is striking that Peter refers to Balaam and to the fact that his ass reproved him. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that beasts are sometimes wiser than men. "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider." The poor ass, so frequently used as a symbol of stupidity, could see what the false prophet, despite his superior brain, could not see.

It is sometimes claimed that too much emphasis is put on prophecy, and that we should concern ourselves more with the practical present than with the future. It is true that prophetic matters can be absorbing studies and may engage the mind more than the heart. It is, however, remarkable that in this little epistle, which prophesies so much, the future is spoken of three times with a view to present effect. Prophetic ministry seems to have the object of recalling the people of God to revealed truth with special emphasis on current need. Even where distinctly future truth is unfolded, its purpose is often to recall to truth already known and in view of recovery to these standards, never merely to interest the mind in the future. Peter makes three appeals in the closing verses of this epistle, each introduced by the word, "seeing" (A.V.).

1. Having referred to the cataclysmic effect of judgement introduced by the day of the Lord, he writes, "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (3:11). He does not say, "What an interesting subject this is"! rather he presses on the brethren how this solemn truth ought to affect us today. In the first epistle he had written of the holy conversation that should mark them. There he uses the word five or six times. So this was truth already known and these prophecies of future events were to have the effect of establishing that more firmly in their hearts.

2. He goes on to point out that God has in mind not only the dissolution of the present heavens and earth, but the introduction of new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, and writes, "Seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless" (3:14). The future bright prospect was intended to have a present bearing on their lives. As they considered these things, peace, spotlessness and blamelessness, they would recall the teaching of the apostles and of the first epistle, in which this kind of life is urged on the saints. If they were to walk in separation from the system about to perish, they were also to be here in conformity with the new conditions about to be introduced.

3. Peter confirms this by a yet further exhortation. They had not only been instructed by himself but also by Paul, and he writes, "Seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (3:17). Here the dangerous teachings of the false teachers are much in the apostle's mind. The world which God will bring in is one in which right conditions will be established on a permanent basis, and the brethren are to anticipate this in their present walk by steadfastly keeping the truth which they had been so carefully taught.

What we *believe* is of immense importance, which is why Satan seeks to distort it in our minds by the influence of falsehoods. The false prophets assert that God will not intervene, but He surely will, and they will not only be proved to be wrong but will suffer the consequences of their evil teachings. Though grace delays the onset of judgement, God will take action. The men who have made lies their refuge and who have sought to shelter under falsehood, will find their refuges all swept away when God rises to do His strange work (cf Isaiah 28:15, 17). While witnessing some time back to a young married couple, the matter of divine punishment was alluded to. The young man rejected the idea since it conflicted with his concept of God. I asked "How would you view it if the atrocities of Nero and Caligula of ancient days, or the equally evil deeds of Hitler and Stalin in our own days, were allowed to continue for ever, unjudged?" After a few moments of complete silence, the young woman said, slowly, "It would be unthinkable". I replied, "Agreed! So if this would be wholly unacceptable to you and me, sinners though we are, how much more so for God, holy, and unutterably pure?" God's character demands this intervention. The day of the Lord *will* come. Peter gives us some solemn insights into what this will mean.

Indeed, he advises us in this very letter to pay heed to the word of Prophecy which shines for us as light in a dark place. The word "dark" may be rendered "obscure" or even "squalid". What grace to provide this welcome beam for us in our present circumstances. We do well indeed to heed its kindly light.

The Lord's return will not only be a day of joy and glory for His people; it will be a day of judgement for His enemies. The prophet Amos writes a solemn message in his book (5:18). "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord. To what end is it to you? The day of the

Lord is darkness, not light." The mass of the nation followed religious ceremonies but were not truly godly. God requires reality in those who profess His name.

In chapter 2 Peter gives three illustrations of the certainty and effect of God's judgement of evil.

1. The angels who sinned.
2. The world before the flood.
3. Sodom and Gomorrah.

The rebel angels were not spared despite the exalted status of their order, but were cast down from their lofty position, delivered into custody and reserved in chains for eventual punishment. This example, on its own, calls for serious attention. He goes on to refer to the old world before the flood. The fall of the angels took place prior to man's creation, it would seem. The evil of the world, judged by God in the flood, took place in the first period of man's history as fallen. That dispensation was one in which violence and corruption developed to a marked degree. God did not spare that society but condemned it by a flood. A small group was saved, Noah and his family, but otherwise, the world of men suffered a complete overthrow. Sodom and her sister city likewise, rotten with corruption. God condemned and overthrew, Lot being delivered. The conclusion Peter reaches is that the Lord is able to deliver the godly, but he goes on immediately to tell us that He reserves the unjust to the day of judgement to be punished.

For such, the day of the Lord will be one of darkness. This remarkable consideration will not be incongruous to the Christian's mind. The blessed light of grace which already shines for guilty man is repulsive to the ungodly. "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." We are also clearly told that "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil". When the Lord Jesus does appear in glory it will be as unacceptable to the ungodly as when He came in lowly grace. The Lord in power and glory is no more wanted than the humble Man of Nazareth. Man has no room for HIM. Of Him in humble Manhood they said, "Away with Him; crucify Him". Of Him in exaltation they said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us". But when He comes He *will* reign, so it will be needful to suppress opposition at the beginning and this will be done in invincible power.

The matter of the apparent long postponement of judgement, which seems to have lulled many into indifference, is gone into in 2 Peter. The apostle thought it expedient to stir up the brethren by putting them in remembrance of truth they already knew. Possibly he had in mind the indifference to truth which was currently invading the Christian circle. He reminds them that when they were told of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, it was no fable they had been told. Peter and others had seen the witness of this on the holy mount. The word of prophecy had thus been confirmed to them. However there were false teachers who dared to deny this and brought on themselves swift destruction. The sentence, he tells us, lingers not. These teachers asked, however, "Where is the promise of His coming?" There was no evident change and things went on and on

much as usual, but Peter shows us the point which their blind eyes missed. With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and, conversely, a thousand years is as one day. The delay is not long in the Lord's estimate, so when He says that He lingers not, we may be sure that He does not linger. What delay has been granted, has been granted by grace to give guilty man space for repentance. But He is not slack concerning His promise as some men may reckon. We need to get our point of view shifted from how man thinks to how God reckons. The men who accuse God of slackness are not in the current of His thoughts. Indeed, it is in grace to such rebels that the delay has been granted. If they understood this they would not sneer, they would worship.

What, then, are the saints to do? They are to look for the day of God with eager anticipation and hasten it. Jacob's seven-year wait for his beloved Rachel may illustrate this point. Seven years is a long time for us men, but for Jacob it passed quickly because of his love for Rachel. We are to get into the patience of Christ. He is waiting patiently, His love for His bride shortening the waiting time for Him. If we are in the current of His thoughts, in the spirit of His own patient waiting, we shall not chafe at any apparent delay but will fill up the intervening time with true and loving service.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE ————— NORMAN GRIFFITHS

2. ITS OBJECTIVE: HEAVEN AND GLORY

Where is your treasure? Are you joyfully awaiting the glory of God? Does the fact that you are "saved in hope" stamp itself on your Christianity?

In this second article in our series, the Christian's Hope will be considered from the aspect of what might be termed its *objective*. Two passages of Scripture will be referred to. Firstly, Colossians 1:3-5, where our hope is seen to be heavenly, to be that which is "laid up for you in heaven". Secondly, Romans 5:1,2, where it is connected with the glory of God; "we rejoice [or, make our boast] in hope of the glory of God".

Heaven and glory are, then, the objective before the saints, and the goal reached when our hope is realised.

In the epistle to the Ephesians the saints are seen as accepted in Christ, the Beloved, and as forming the church, the body of Christ, in its completeness, according to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. As such, they are seen as united to Christ in the heavenlies, as those who have been quickened, raised up, and seated in the heavenlies in Christ. In the epistle to the Colossians, however, the saints are viewed as the body of Christ here upon earth, as the vessel for the display of the glories and wisdom of the Head, Christ. This is the force of

Colossians 1:18, together with v. 27. "Christ in you, the hope of glory," that is, Christ manifested in His body here upon earth, and the Christian's hope laid up in heaven.

The epistle to the Colossians begins in very much the same way as the first epistle to the Thessalonians. Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:2,3 with Colossians 1:3-5. Here again we have the apostle's remembrance of the saints' faith, love and hope. Faith in Christ Jesus, love to all the saints, and hope which is laid up in heaven. They were here upon earth, but their hope was in heaven where Christ now sits at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high, in glory.

The heavenly character of Christianity is unknown to, or denied by, the many sects and heresies of our day. Their hopes are all earthly. They use the Scriptures to support their teachings of future blessing upon the earth for their adherents, and thus the Christian's heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1), and the hope laid up there, are denied, as also in many instances the deity of Christ is denied.

In that great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, we read that if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of all men (v. 19). And so we shall be, if our hope is earth-bound. When our Lord was here upon earth He said to His disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20). *In heaven*, where our hope is laid up for us, where the Christian's inheritance is reserved incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away — that is where our treasure is to be.

This hope laid up for us in heaven is also spoken of in the first chapter of Colossians as "the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23). Viewing the saints as here upon earth, where they are always in danger of being drawn towards earthly systems of religion, set up by men, with ritual and ordinances which appeal to sight and sense (this is a major subject of this epistle), there is great need to be grounded and settled in the faith, so as not to be moved away from the heavenly hope.

In Colossians 3:1,2 we are exhorted to seek the things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, and to set our affection (or, mind) on them. The hope laid up for us in heaven (1:5) is centred on Christ at God's right hand.

The objective before us in our Christian hope is *heaven*, but connected with it is *glory*. This is stated in Colossians 1:27. *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. That is, Christ in us Gentiles, who once were completely outside the sphere of blessing, having no hope, without God in this world, but who now have Christ dwelling in the heart by faith (Ephesians 2:12; 3:17) — Christ in us by His spirit (Romans 8:9,10). The objective of the Christian's hope is glory — "glory with Christ above" — and that glory is the glory of God which now shines in the face of Jesus Christ, the knowledge of which we have as our treasure (2 Corinthians 4:6,7).

In hope of that glory we are making our boast; this is what

Romans 5:1-2 tells us. In this passage the Christian position past, present and future is delineated. We are justified by faith in God who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, after He had suffered for our sins, raising Him up as the proof that His sacrifice of Himself was accepted. All the claims of the holy throne of God have been met, and we who believe are justified, cleared of every charge of guilt that could ever be made against us (Romans 4:24-5:1). The consequence of this is that we have peace with God — known and enjoyed. The whole outlook of our souls Godward is one of settled peace. God has been glorified, and without compromising one whit His holiness and righteousness He can have us in His presence in perfect suitability to His glory. As to the present, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, in the present favour of God. Looking into the future, we rejoice (boast) in hope of the glory of God.

In Colossians 1:5,23, we noted that the hope laid up for us in heaven is connected with the gospel. So also in Romans 8:24, we are *saved in hope*. Whilst we wait in patience for it to be realised, we are reminded (see Romans 8:18) that the sufferings of this present time, in which we have our share as part of a groaning creation, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. When our hope of glory is realised, then creation's hope will also be satisfied, for the creation will be delivered from bondage into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

The Christian's Hope, then, is a heavenly hope, and it is a glorious hope. Does the knowledge of this lift us above present things?

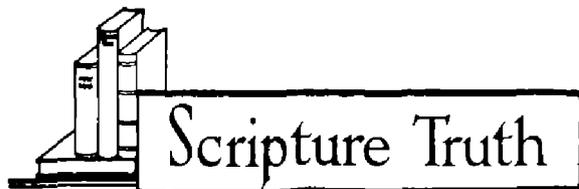
In the next article, God willing, we shall consider the *character* of the Christian's hope — a *living* hope, and a *blessed* hope.

THE AIMS OF A CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

“If our pages are idly read, listlessly gaped over, and then carelessly thrown aside, how does [our magazine] differ from a newspaper? If no good be done by it: no sad heart comforted, no drooping heart revived, no doubting heart encouraged, no erring heart reproofed, no cold heart warmed, no hard heart melted; if it convey no reproof, correction, instruction, or consolation; if it mislead instead of guide, harden instead of soften, engender carnality, worldliness and death, instead of spirituality, heavenly-mindedness and life, why should we trouble ourselves any more with its publication?

. . . But because it is our belief that good has been done, and is doing by it, we are encouraged to persevere.”

J. C. Philpot, The Gospel Standard, 1849



(incorporating *Words of Help*)

MAY, 1982

THE WORLD

T. TYSON

2. ITS THREE MAIN MEANINGS IN SCRIPTURE

Definitions need not be dry! Concordance work is basic to Bible study. The English word "world" has a range of meanings; in Greek the range of the words so translated is somewhat different, as we shall see.

In this paper we shall distinguish between the different words translated "world", particularly in the New Testament. This will give a foundation for a fuller examination later.

We can find three main ideas. (1) The earth and its inhabitants. This is principally a geographical idea, with few moral implications. (2) The age. Here it is an historical period. (3) Man's ordered society, usually, but not always, in contrast or conflict with what is of God and of Christ.

1. The earth and its inhabitants. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word, *erets*, is usually translated "earth", but occasionally "world", as for example in Psalm 22:27 — "All the ends of the world". For an example of its translation as "earth", out of at least one hundred and thirty-five references in the Psalms, see Psalm 2:8 ("I will give thee . . . the uttermost parts of the earth"), or Psalm 148, where four times "praise from the earth", is mentioned. The last verse of the Old Testament is, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse".

In the New Testament we find the corresponding word *gē*, from which we derive the word "geography". Only in one place — Revelation 13:3 — is it translated "world" ("All the world wondered after the beast"). Elsewhere it is always rendered "earth". See, for example, "earth" as in contrast to "heaven", in Matthew 6:10 ("Thy will be done on earth"), or Matthew 18:19 ("If two of you shall agree on earth"), or Matthew 24:35 ("Heaven and earth shall pass away").

In the book of Revelation, where the earth is much in view, this word is used at least seventy-five times.

A second New Testament word with a related range of meaning is *oikoumenē*, meaning "the habitable, or inhabited, earth or land". Sometimes as the context shows it is used to designate the then known world, or part of it. See for example Luke 2:1 ("There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed"), or Acts 17:6 ("These that have turned the world upside down are come here also").

At other times this word bears a more universal meaning, as in

Matthew 24:14 (“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world . . .”), or Luke 4:5 (“ . . . and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time”).

2. The age. The Greek word is *aion*. This word is often translated “world”, particularly in the Authorised Version.

It usually has reference to the coming in of another “age” and the ending of this present one; or it contrasts the lifestyle of those whose only hope is in this present age, with those who hope in a glorious age to come.

Examples of the first use are to be found in Matthew 13:39,40 (“The harvest is the end of the world. . . . So shall it be in the end of the world”); Luke 18:30 (“ . . . shall . . . receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come, life everlasting”); Ephesians 1:21 (“Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”).

The second sense, that where a contrasting lifestyle is the prominent thought, is to be found, on the one hand in 2 Corinthians 4:4 (“The god of this world”), and on the other in Galatians 1:4 (“ . . . that he might deliver us out of this present evil world”).

Because Christ has delivered us, the devil seeks to ensnare us again and spoil our testimony. The Christian pathway is one of conflict. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12). Some of the snares that Satan uses, and against which we must constantly watch in prayer, are:

- the wisdom of this world (1 Corinthians, chapters 1 and 2)
- the cares of this world (Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:19)
- the riches of this world (1 Timothy 6:17)
- the love of this world (2 Timothy 4:10)

3. Man’s ordered society. The word most frequently used in the New Testament for “world” is the Greek word *kosmos*. Its basic meaning is “orderly arrangement, beauty”; but it is generally used of man’s order of government, interests, religion, and so on. It is in John’s Gospel where this word is most frequently met — at least sixty-seven times; thirty-four of them being in chapters 13-17.

These chapters particularly, but also the rest of John’s Gospel and his first epistle, help us to understand the spiritual significance of the word. It speaks of man’s realm of politics, pleasure, business, and religion, in contrast to what is of God the Father and of Christ. Paul also uses the word in the same sense.

Kosmos does not always carry this spiritual sense of antagonism to the things of God. See for example John 1:10 (“He was in the world, and the world was made by him . . .”), or Acts 17:24 (“God who made the world”), or finally Romans 1:20 (“ . . . from the creation of the world”).

But by way of example we shall refer to a few places where the spiritual meaning is dominant. These will be dealt with more fully later.

In John 3:16,17 (“God so loved the world”), clearly the people of the world are referred to. The idea of opposition is not present; yet there is the sense of lostness and distance. In John 8:12 (“I am the

light of the world”), a contrast is drawn between light and darkness.

In many other verses, however, the thought of opposition and conflict is very marked. See for example John 8:23 (“Ye are of this world; I am not of this world”), or John 15:18 (“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me”), or finally, Galatians 6:14 (“the world is crucified unto me”).

A better understanding of these words and their uses will help us to profit more from the spiritual truths connected with them.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE — COLIN CURRY

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by Me.”

“He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” John 14:6, 9.

“The key feature of Christianity”; the “pivotal chapter of the sequence” of I AMs in John’s Gospel. The previous article in this series appeared in January of this year.

While fulness of content marks all the “I am” statements of the Lord Jesus, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” is particularly comprehensive and succinct. Having reached chapter 14 in the Gospel we have passed to the private words with the disciples on the eve of the crucifixion. No longer are there outward signs from which the teaching springs; nor do His words cause a split amongst His hearers, as in earlier instances. Here He speaks to a more coherent group; these were words for “His own” (13:1). As He spoke, the disciples at times showed their weaknesses and their lack of understanding. Soon they would lapse in their loyalty to Him. He saw it all, yet also He knew of their basic attachment to Him, springing from His love for them. Despite all, He could look ahead beyond the cross and His departure, to a point when (strengthened by the Holy Spirit) they would live in the good of these far-seeing and encouraging words.

Against the dark background of His betrayal and death, our Lord sets the brightest of all Christian experiences, soon to be known by them. His love for His own, with all the supplies and aid that it provides, can look ahead in this confident manner. He does not fasten on the weaknesses of disciples, nor on the rough road for Himself in order to open the way ahead. Divine love can speak with assurance, however dark the hour; He does not only say that certain experiences *may* be theirs, but that they *would* be theirs, in that day when the Spirit came. Of course, in chapter 17, He also prays urgently for His own, that they may be protected from those evil influences which could spoil their living in these Christian experiences. Prayer and confidence go together in a remarkable way in that chapter. In all these chapters divine love thinks not of itself but of its loved ones, supporting them, comforting them, with a well-grounded assurance about the outcome. His departure is a *going* to the Father, and their experience, opened up to them by Him,

is to be a *coming* to the Father, with all the other experiences which will flow from that.

This matter of seeing the Father in Him, knowing the Father as revealed in the Son, access to the Father through Him, might be spoken of as the key feature of Christianity, the very kernel of Christian truth, and right at the centre of the Christian life. The statement we are now considering seems to fall at the heart of all that our Lord disclosed to His disciples on that Passover eve.

Chapter 14 does indeed seem to be the pivotal chapter in this sequence. In the chapter the central elements of the Christian revelation are picked out, and the main characteristics of the Christian day made clear. The Christian period *began* soon after our Lord's departure from this world to the Father. It will *end* when the great promise of these opening verses is fulfilled; when all His people will be with Him where He is. Meanwhile, faith in Him, unseen, but nevertheless a living and well-known Object on whom faith can confidently rest, is the main principle of the Christian life. A further vital feature is that (though *He* is absent) the Holy Spirit is now present, since Pentecost, amongst believers and indwelling each of them. In Him there is power and enablement for the Christian life. Through Him believers can draw on what has been revealed in Christ; they can be alive in that realm which our Lord has opened up, and their manner of life can be an overflow from that experience.

Plainly, much of chapter 13 is preparatory to the disclosures of chapter 14. There were processes necessary before the disciples could "have part with Him"; indicated so significantly by His act of service in the washing of their feet, and His words about it. The false disciple had to withdraw, and self-confidence in Peter needed to be sobered and humbled by serious words from our Lord. Only then did He speak the notable words in chapter 14. What follows chapter 14 seems to be consequent on the appreciation in experience of the major truths in that chapter. By the Spirit, and drawing upon this knowledge of the Father and the Son, the disciples would be well supplied and fortified for fruitful lives springing from their living link with Him. Power for witnessing, and for overcoming opposition in a world so foreign to their new life, would be found from that same Source. Thus, chapters 15 and 16 are seen to be occupied principally with the outcome in the lives of believers of the cardinal teaching of chapter 14, known and proved in an inward heartfelt way.

The words "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" form one single majestic pronouncement, and the three parts within the statement are closely knit together. Over-analysis can easily spoil the impact of this grand utterance from our Lord, which draws attention to these unique realities which subsist in Himself. But it is evident that we must look at the parts of His statement in turn, though we must endeavour not to lose sight of the strong linkages between them.

The Way

The remainder of the verse shows the primary setting of the great words on which we are dwelling; "no man cometh to the Father but by me".

The Lord Jesus is speaking about our coming to know the Father, seeing Him in Himself (the incarnate Son), drawing near and being welcomed by the Father in a conscious and vital way. He is not only the door into this area of appreciation, nor just a signpost pointing out the way; He *is* the Way. From the start of our journey of faith, right through to the endless joys of the Father's house, He is the Way. At every point too, while the Christian life is being lived, we have in Him an open admission into the home-atmosphere, into the warmth and welcome of the Father's love. The quality and kind of love that will greet us at the end of the Christian journey, is knowable along the way. In the very process of occupation with our Lord, we have an Entry into the wealth of the Christian life which is inherent in Himself. A Way implies movement and progression, and spiritual movement is made when He is our Guide, our Companion, and the Object filling our vision. In following that Way, strength for progress will be found, and our hearts will be satisfied, as we touch those inward experiences available to us in the revelation of the Father in the Son.

We must understand, of course, that the Way of access to the Father includes the whole Action which was undertaken by our Lord, when He came as the One sent by the Father. It involves His death on the cross, His finishing the work which was given Him to do. The Person of Christ *and* His redemptive work must always be closely associated in our thoughts. How could we adequately appreciate His great Person without including in our thinking that great Action which He alone could accomplish? Conversely, how that action (so perfect in its manner) is enhanced by the awareness of the glory of the Person who carried it through; and how it has added to His glory! Furthermore, the revelation of the Father, and of the unearthly quality of the eternal love, was only fully consummated when He laid down His life in death. There, in Him, the peerless nature of divine love was displayed to the uttermost. The love that pervades the heavenly realms, the love of the Father and of the Son, is perceived in its supreme character by meditation on our Lord's manner of leaving the world, going to the Father through death. Truly the Person who in Himself provides the Way to the Father, *and* the manner in which He opened up that Way for us, command a response from our hearts and a desire to move along that Way as a habitual feature of our lives.

It should also be noted that a Way of living goes hand in hand with the experience of knowing the Way to the Father. Perhaps it is not surprising that the early Christians came to be known as followers of "that Way" (see, for example, Acts 19:9, 23). Their way of behaviour had the stamp of the life of Christ upon it; it reflected the living Person with whom they were in touch. The word "the Way", as a description of Christian conduct, suggests a few points which we now mention briefly.

First, Christ is the Way in the sense that He is the *pattern* for the believer. To take the Christian way in practice is to have one's mode of life shaped by constant contact with Him. Thus it is that Christ-like features and a Christ-honouring manner come into evidence. "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" in those early days, and their demeanour, including the energy of their witness, was entirely

consistent with it. Secondly, following a way is a *purposeful* and directed activity. If a man walks on a definite pathway he is going somewhere; he follows a clear course, with objectives, and without distraction. He knows *where* he is going, and *why*. The opposite characteristics, aimless wandering, drifting and loitering through life, are certainly quite remote from a proper following of Him who is the Way. Though the Christian life is a disciplined, obedient life, it is in reality the life that has purpose and point and real joy in it. Though the world is a vast maze to many, and a wilderness to the believer, there *is* a Way in the wilderness, a Highway through the desert, and that Way is Christ.

The Truth

“What is truth?” was Pilate’s cynical word to Christ, showing his indifference to Him, and a measure of contempt also. Perhaps it was not entirely a jest, made in an unfeeling way. Perhaps he felt an emptiness in life as he knew it, a lack of anything of true worth and of absolute value. Behind the façade of his life there must have been little indeed to fill his inward being. Modern thinking men, too, will say that all values are relative, including moral values, that there are no absolutes on which to found our lives. It is another way of saying that the true Anchorage in life has not yet been discovered. How different from this are the statements of Scripture on these issues! To pick out only a few of the New Testament letters, how full are John’s epistles of the black-and-white contrast between truth and error. How important it was to John to see his readers walking in the truth, and steering well clear of its opposite! How often Paul, writing to Timothy, spoke of “the truth” and “the faith”, and warned about “old wives’ fables”, words and disputings from sources “destitute of the truth”, and the like! How plain it is too that the truth which it is so necessary to hold, and to live by, has its sum and substance in Christ!

Christ *is* the Truth: truth, as well as grace, came by Jesus Christ. Measured by the standard of Christ, all else stands revealed in its true character. The truth about God, His character, His attributes, His holy love, stands and shines in Him who is the Truth. The sad and shameful truth about fallen man, his sin and God’s abhorrence of it, *that* truth was openly evident when Christ came alongside men. The marvellous truth that there *is* another Man, a Man pleasing to God, holy, faithful, and flawless in devotion, is perfectly seen in Him. But the truth manifest in Christ cannot be covered in its full extent. The vast canvas of creation — good and evil, time, history, redemption, sovereign grace, the outworking of eternal purpose, the Church and its destiny: how the whole pattern of all things comes into focus, takes on a coherence, becoming real to us (though our appreciation is small), as we see how Scripture presents it! *He* is the Key to all truth, the One who imparts the impress of Truth upon all the scope of Biblical teaching. Surely this is *living* truth that centres in a Person; and we shall live in the Truth too, if guided by the Spirit of Truth, whose mission is to draw our attention to *Him*.

In a clear and forthright verse (1 John 2:22) John the apostle singles out the Truth in its bedrock form; and, as might be expected, its basis

is the Person of Christ. "Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denies the Father and the Son." These are the things denied when "the Truth" is rejected. Our Lord's statement "I am . . . the Truth" is similar in kind, picking out the summit and centre of all revealed truth. The essential truth is enshrined in the Person of Christ, the Son of the Father, Man after God's heart, declarer of the Father's Name, and Himself the Way for others (associated with Him) into the realms of eternal life and love.

The Life

"The Way, the Truth, *and* the Life." The final strand in this unique statement makes it whole and complete. Way and Truth, without Life, would surely be an incomplete combination. In Himself, He is the line of approach to the Father; there is no other Way. He is also the demonstration of the End to be reached in taking that Way. What is revealed in Him, that is, the Father declared and known in the Son, is Truth: it has substance of an absolute kind in it, sufficient to fill our hearts for eternity. But how are we to move into those experiences, and how do we participate actively within those regions of reality, unless we have "the Life" that moves and belongs there? Thankfully we can see that these things are not separable. We have it all, Way, Truth, and Life, in Him.

Life is something quite remarkable in all its manifestations, and it would be wrong to think of any form of created life as less than marvellous. But surely the *Life* here under consideration is on a different level altogether. The life manifested in Christ is the Life of eternity: its habitat is the realm of eternal Love, where He is all and in all. It is imperishable life, fadeless, and ever fresh and new. To have Life in Him is to live for ever; but it is also to *live*, with a vitality and energy that derives from Himself. Here on earth, before we are fully transported into those home-realms of eternal life, possession of that Life in Him surely should mean that ours is an animated, well-directed kind of living; eager to be engaged in the richest of all fields of experience to which He introduces us. The graces of Christ, too, appearing in our earthly ways, would be another indication that we possess that Life in Him, and are living it daily with Him.

Life has been a theme closely involved in each of these weighty sayings from our Lord; and the last of these, "I am the true Vine", shows this feature too. Aback of everything, making these factual statements so real, and so heartening, is this great Person who is "the Life". It is important to see the coherence of these statements taken as a whole. The Speaker, being who He is, is the living Bond uniting all these facets of the truth concerning Himself.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE _____ NORMAN GRIFFITHS

3. ITS CHARACTER: LIVING AND BLESSED

The thing hoped for gives character to hope as a present experience. The sure prospect of heaven and of glory makes our hope to be felt as a living and a blessed, happy hope.

The *character* of the Christian's hope is set forth in two passages of Scripture. Firstly, in 1 Peter 1:3-5, where our hope is found to be a *living* one; and secondly, in Titus 2:11-14, where it is found to be a *blessed* one — for which we look at the appearing of the glory of the great God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In his first epistle Peter addressed the Christians as strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). A *stranger* is one who has a birth link with another country; a *pilgrim* is one who is not staying here but is moving on to another country. We see this portrayed in Abraham and his faithful seed, who confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, declaring plainly that they sought a country — a better country, that is an heavenly (Hebrews 11:13-16). We are reminded of our Lord's own words, "Ye are not of the world" (John 15:19).

This "birth link" is referred to in 1 Peter 1:3 — "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again", so that we are "born again, nor of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth in us" (v. 23). This was also our Lord's teaching to Nicodemus — "Except a man be born again [or, 'born from above']", and "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:3, 5, 7). Our "birth-link" with heaven is *new*; it is *from above*; and it is by the living word of God (of which the water is a figure — see Psalm 119:9, or Ephesians 5:26), and by the Spirit (also prefigured by water — living water: see John 7:37-39). This new birth brings new life — eternal life which Paul, in the introduction of his letter to Titus, and writing of the faith of God's elect and of its confession before men, speaks of as hope of eternal life which God, which cannot lie, promised before the ages of time (Titus 1:2).

In all that concerns this world, *death reigns* (Romans 5:17), but in Christianity everything is *living*. We know God as the living God (Matthew 16:16). When the Sadducees, who said there was no resurrection, came with their questions to the Lord, He reminded them that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive in the heavenly country — to God, the living God (Matthew 22:32).

So too the Christian's hope is a living hope, which we have by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is the living, victorious, glorious Saviour who said to John in exile on the isle of Patmos, "I am the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages" (Revelation 1:18, New Trans. of J.N.D.).

Our hope is a living one, for it is connected with the living God,

the living Father, with a living, exalted Saviour who Himself is that living Bread of which a man may eat, and live for ever (John 6:51, 57). He is the precious, living stone — the corner-, the head- and the foundation-stone (1 Peter 2:4). It is connected with the Holy Spirit, the living water, and brought to us by the living word (Hebrews 4:12).

Not only is the Christian's a living hope; it is also a *blessed* hope. The word translated "blessed" is also rendered, "happy": and this is its simple meaning. In many of the doxologies of Scripture it is applied to God (e.g. Romans 9:5). In his letter to Titus, Paul instructs him to exhort the saints to godly living in view of the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ — "that blessed hope" (Titus 2:11-14).

In this passage, we notice how Paul presents the truth again in relation to past, present and future, in the same way as we found him to do (when we were considering the "hope of glory") in Romans 5; 1, 2.

Here, as to the past, the grace of God that carries with it salvation for all men, has appeared. Jesus Christ has given Himself for us; a mighty work of redemption has been accomplished. The effect of this wondrous manifestation of the grace of God is to be seen in this present age — in sober, upright, and godly living: *sober*, in relation to ourselves, *upright*, in relation to other people, and *godly*, in relation to God. Then, as to the future, we look for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to *redeem us from all iniquity* — that is, to set us free; to *purify for Himself a people that are his very own* (N.I.V.) — that is, to set us apart; *zealous of good works* — that is, to set us on fire for Him.

Our hope is a blessed hope — a happy hope. Whilst we are looking for its realisation, we, living for him, should be a blessed, happy people. Happy it is above all in its heavenly and glorious objective — the appearing of the glory of . . . Jesus Christ.

In our final article, God willing, we shall consider the practical effect of the Christian's hope: it is a *purifying* hope (1 John 3:1-3), and an *anchoring* hope (Hebrews 6:9-20).

TWO CENTENARIES

The centenary that has left its mark on this issue of *Scripture Truth* (haven't you guessed yet?) will be ignored by *The Times*. Instead that newspaper commemorated, on 19th April, the death of Charles Darwin. How well has Darwinism stood the test of time? Not very well, according to an astonishingly frank, major article by Christopher Booker. Natural selection has proved utterly incapable of explaining evolution, and the evolutionists are at open war among themselves.

Booker seems to be only a journalist. And he does not accept "creationism" at all — let that be clear. The scientists can be expected to protest that he has "entirely misunderstood" the current "debate within evolution". But has he?

ON RE-READING SOME EARLY TRACTS BY J. N. DARBY

T. BALDERSTON

1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Why do we meet as we do? Widespread confusion and ignorance seem to surround this question. Perhaps it is time to look again at the history of it.

What caused the "early brethren" (as we call them) to secede from the existing communions and set up a distinctive "testimony"? Were the reasons peculiar to the age and circumstances they were in, and if so, is the stand they took now obsolete?

Many of the commonly stated answers to the first question in the above paragraph are, on their own, less than satisfactory. They belong to the superstructure of the answer; if we try to turn them into the foundation, they disintegrate.

We may, for example, say, "They were tired of the sectarian and denominational barriers around them and sought to meet simply as believers". True, but by the very act of doing so they could not fail to add yet another party to Christendom, to aggravate the evil of which they complained. Were they so naïve as not to see this? Or, if they saw this danger, yet persisted, they must indeed have had much more in mind than simply the setting up of another "table".

Or we may say, "They withdrew in order to meet according to the pattern laid down in Scripture". This too is true. But where does it stop? What company of believers on earth conforms to Scripture in perfection? And there is another side to this question, namely, that separation for less than excellent grounds from what lays good claim to represent the church of God on earth is *schism*, and condemned by Scripture (Titus 3:10). Schism was an error the "early brethren" were acutely conscious of⁽¹⁾ What kind, or degree, of disobedience to Scripture in a company of Christians renders secession imperative?

A yet more common statement may appear to answer this last question. "They left," we may say, "because of their objection to the one-man ministry." There is plenty of evidence in the history of Mr. Darby's own rupture with the established church, and in the earliest writings of "brethren", to support this statement. Yet even this is inadequate. For if the separation was prompted solely by the desire to break bread and preach the word without being cramped by the dead hand of clericalism and parochial jurisdictions, wherein did it differ from the grounds of the Methodist separation consummated over the previous hundred years? In the later eighteenth century a clear split had developed between the "methodists" proper and those evangelicals who elected to remain in the establishment; the latter affirmed their loyalty to the established church precisely by their increasingly strict observance of "church (i.e. clerical and parochial) order"⁽²⁾. Yet all the while a steady

*Numbers in parenthesis refer to Notes at the end of this article.

dribble of evangelical clergy was seceding, either to set up independent, unattached, chapels, or to exercise their ministry among such as the Baptists⁽³⁾. Were the "early brethren" just a fuller flood along the same channel? Mr. Darby did not think so. "You ought to become a Dissenter", is what in later years he remembered Robert Daly (evangelical rector of Powerscourt, later Bishop of Cashel) saying to him after reading his first tract. "No," is what Mr. D. replied, ". . . You want to put me there, but that you will not do." But in what respect did Mr. Darby's position differ from that of all other "dissenters"?

A last statement seems to bring us closer to an answer. "None of the existing denominations," we might point out, "offered the true liberty of the Spirit. In all of them, human pre-arrangement displaced His sovereignty, and ministerial pretensions were in fact on the increase"⁽⁴⁾. But this answer faces us today with a further, acute, problem *they* only partly faced⁽⁵⁾. The one-man ministry has few defenders today. Ministerial monopoly is everywhere in retreat. More to the point, congregations and "fellowships" abound in which spontaneous prayer, praise, and "prophecy" are encouraged. Concepts such as "body ministry", and "the exercise of all the gifts", are the common coin of present-day evangelical religion⁽⁶⁾. Has the work of the "early brethren" been done all too well? Have the views they championed become so general that the separate, identifiable continuance of the "meetings" they established is an archaism, their witness obsolete? Many of us seem unaware of these developments in present-day Christianity, but ignorance is not a very good justification for continued separation from many brethren. Or, if we are dimly aware, we may argue that the ordained clergy still play a larger part, and attract a greater respect on account of their collars, than they ought. Does this reduce the difference to one of degree, rather than of kind, and to quite fine degree at that? If it does, I for one hope that my eyes will be opened to it, for I consider it sheer schism to maintain any separation from other brethren, which fundamental axioms of "the faith once delivered to the saints" do not dictate.

This may be a suitable occasion to reconsider the question at the head of our article. The materials are to hand to trace the reasons for J. N. Darby's secession from the Church of Ireland. So far as I shall trace them, they are in fact quite representative of the reasons of most other "early brethren", as a perusal of the contents of the various volumes of the *Christian Witness* would abundantly confirm⁽⁷⁾.

I shall in particular be examining the arguments of the first three tracts reprinted in Volume 1 of Mr. Darby's *Collected Writings*. There we shall find plainly the foundation we need, the necessary presupposition that makes the various explanations already reviewed cogent instead of incomplete. What was this presupposition? It was the conviction that the Christian is an alien on earth and an heir of heaven, and that the world is totally antagonistic to him and his testimony. That in him the flesh raged against the Spirit; that outside him was a world under the authority of Satan, diametrically opposed to the authority of God's Son; and that any union framed in alliance with the world was

necessarily a confederacy against the things of God. This was what the Church had become. So he left.

This is a presupposition which most Christians today no longer feel with the intensity he felt it. Countless gospel Christians of that day would, however, have heartily supported these sentiments, *as applied to the individual*. They form the backbone, for example, of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. But what about the *Church*? The worldliness and deadness of the mass of its clergy, the infidelity of a portion of its doctors, the contradiction between the necessity of conversion and the form of its baptismal and burial services — were too glaring to be ignored. Those of tenderer conscience left, especially clergy, who found this contradiction between their soul-experience and the forms of words they were obligated to read over infants, and over the corpses of notorious sinners, intolerable. Sometimes their soul-agony in leaving was so intense that they could not believe any evangelical clergyman who remained to be other than a “dead professor”, an impostor. But they left on individual grounds, because the Anglican system had forced them personally to live a lie⁽⁸⁾.

Most, however, rationalised the matter in another way. They resorted to a specious distinction between the visible and the invisible church. Some distinction between the church in profession, as man sees it, and the church in perfection, as God sees it, is, of course, unavoidable. Scripture makes it. What is true of the latter ought to form the standard of judgement of the former. But evangelicals separated the visible and invisible aspects of the church into almost unrelated compartments. That the visible church should form the display of the separating glory of Christ (cp. Exodus 33:16) never occurred to them; *its* purpose was to ensure that the state upheld principles of Scriptural morality and Scriptural knowledge, “helping no one to heaven but hedging the brink of hell”⁽⁹⁾. That it did no more didn't matter, for true religion was the business of the invisible church, which found its reality in the hearts of believers. In the visible church, relationships between (professing) believer and believer were strong; links with God were weak. In the invisible church relations between believer and believer were weak, but relations with God were strong. Thus the latent function of the visible/invisible dichotomy was to efface that fundamental opposition between the church and the world which the cross makes, by putting the relations of the believer with God in one compartment, and his religious relations with men in the other.

Mr. Darby stripped away the fiction which permitted believers to judge the Church by vastly lower standards than those by which they judged individual Christian conduct. He did so by a candid analysis of the “ground of gathering” of all that professed to be the “church”, that is, of the acknowledged relationships with each other and toward the world, and of the common objectives, which united members of the established church, or members of the dissenting denominations. It is the analysis of these sinews of fellowship which, so far as I can see, distinguished his writing. Wrong associations defile, where consciously and deliberately held, but right relations with Christ, with His people and toward the world place the believer in the present experience of the

relation of the body to the Head, of the bride to the Bridegroom.

Thus it was that, in criticising existing denominations he was not led, as some exercised souls were, to doubt the value of *all* communion; he was not led to reduce the value of the gathering together of believers solely to a secret relationship between preacher and hearer, between Word uttered and Word spiritually heard in the conscience⁽¹⁰⁾. God has placed us in divine relationships with His people; let us see to it that we value them! Nor could Mr. Darby fall into the trap of concluding that believers, once purged of wrong associations, could now act as if the established, and the worldly dissenting, denominations were not there, and simply proceed to regard their own congregations as *the* true church. The rest of Christendom was a *fact*, a fact which, as Mr. D. read Scripture, would remain until the end; as far as the public testimony was concerned, these remained the bodies that chiefly bore the name of Christ before the world, albeit in dishonour. Many believers remained in them; that true, comprehensive gathering together of all the children of God under the cross and outside this world system could not now be re-created. The church, as regards its testimony, was in ruins; but it was still possible for each believer, for himself, to walk according to the relationships in which God had placed him at Pentecost. Without claiming to *be* the church, here at least believers would be on that divine ground of gathering where the blessings attaching to the church could be enjoyed.

Before tracing the origins of these views in Mr. Darby's earliest writings, I wish to consider the circumstances in which they emerged. In the providence of God, the state of religious Ireland at the time was used to draw his attention to the question, "What is the church?"

Religious Ireland was dominated in the 1820s by a recrudescence of sectarian controversy. There were three main religious parties — Romanist, Anglican and Presbyterian; but the controversy was largely confined to the first two. A recent historian of Protestant-Catholic relations in Ireland at the time puts it thus: "What was really being debated was which of the two chief ecclesiastical bodies in Ireland had the authority to proclaim itself as the "true" church which alone could bring the fulness of the faith to the people"⁽¹¹⁾. It is easy to see why Catholic polemic should revolve round this question. But why should Anglicans join issue on the same ground, and what caused the controversy suddenly to flare up again? Three circumstances may be mentioned briefly.

Firstly, the shadow of Catholic emancipation — that is, of the removal of the various civil disabilities under which Catholics laboured (it actually came in 1829). In England the politicians, the higher clergy, and the evangelical leadership were agreed that emancipation was overdue. But although the problems of Ireland were the major argument in its favour, the Church of Ireland itself was alarmed. For its claim to be the national religion of Ireland was so little based on popular support, that it had to be so much the more exclusively based on the contention that Anglican religion alone tended to civil well-being — that Romanists' loyalties were necessarily pre-committed to the Papacy and to Catholic

Europe. If however the state itself admitted Romanists to public civil office on equal terms with Anglicans, what would become of this contention and the doctrine of establishment based upon it?

The second seed of controversy was the aggressive personality of the current Archbishop of Dublin — William Magee. Inter-sectarian relations had been settling down to a state of “live and let live” in the first twenty years of the century, we are told⁽¹²⁾. Magee upset this equilibrium. An intelligent man, he saw clearly that such a state of affairs could only work to the detriment of the minority but established religion he represented. His earliest archiepiscopal *Charge* (i.e. address to his clergy), delivered in 1822, was occupied with the problems of the Church of Ireland, “hemmed in”, as he put it, “by two opposite descriptions of professing Christians; the one, possessing a church, without what we can properly call a religion; and the other, possessing a religion, without what we can properly call a church. . . .”⁽¹³⁾. The contents of this *Charge* indicate that what worried Magee most at the time was the latter deviation — namely, the rapid growth of dissent⁽¹⁴⁾; however it seems to have been the former deviation — Romanism — that picked up the gauntlet, and Magee proved by no means reluctant to intensify hostilities. Romanist attacks were simple and effective: that the C. of I. had been established at the arbitrary whim of a monarch, that people belonged to it only for the extensive material advantages it conferred, and that were its considerable privileges withdrawn it would rapidly disappear.

The third reason for the recrudescence of controversy was the vigorous evangelisation of the Irish people in the '10s and '20s by a new wave of evangelical clergy⁽¹⁵⁾. In 1816 the aristocratic Power le Poer Trench, already Bishop of Elphin and soon to be Archbishop of Tuam, was converted; he was but the most illustrious of a growing body of men, bringing the gospel to the Irish peasantry as they had never heard it before. Small wonder that these unprecedentedly successful attempts to convert the Irish added vehemence to the priests' attacks on the Church of Ireland at that time.

In 1827 three acts of Archbishop Magee revealed this clash between papal and established religion in its true colours, as far as one “very obscure” evangelical clergyman was concerned. These were the Archbishop's *Charge* of October 1826 to his clergy, the Petition from the clergy of his province to the House of Commons for protection, instigated by him, and thirdly, the oath of loyalty to the crown imposed by him on new converts as a condition of admission to the established church. How these alienated the young Darby and what his response was will be the subject of the next article.

These were years when the foundations were being destroyed (Psalm 11:3). Violent storms (to change the image), which first blew up in the French Revolution, were breaking up the settled climate of the European social, political and religious order. The evangelical revival itself was upsetting the urbane, delicate, but basically cynical conventions of polite Anglo-Irish society. It was as if the clouds in which this world normally envelops its inhabitants parted briefly in the storm, and heaven

burst momentarily into view. Eternal realities displaced the earthly preoccupations of many for a brief decade, and the truth of the Lord's coming, and the sense of its nearness, absorbed many hearts. These storms swept with particular severity across the "Irish clergyman's" soul, and he found a strange conflict between his own singular and intense concern for the eternal destinies of his poor parishioners in Calary, Co. Wicklow, and the diverse, limited, this-worldly concerns of his superiors. The question of the true church, raised by *them* basically as a weapon in a struggle between two this-worldly hierarchies, was transfigured for *him* by this sunbeam from eternity; and in this light he learned to distinguish the friendship of the king of England from the friendship of Christ ascended, to distinguish the heavenly, the well-founded city from its many earthly imitations.

NOTES

1. The two sides are presented in the earliest periodical of "brethren" — the *Christian Witness*: Henry Borlase, "Separation from Apostasy not Schism" (1834), and J. L. Harris, "The Sin of Schism" (1838).
2. G. R. Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (London, 1908); also C. S. Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order* (Cambridge, 1940).
3. H. H. Rowdon, "Secessions from the Established Church in the early nineteenth century", *Vox Evangelica* (1964) records some of these. On evangelical secessions from the Church of Ireland, see A. R. Acheson, "The Evangelicals in the Church of Ireland, 1784-1859" (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1967), pp. 119-60. See also J. H. Philpot, *The Seceders: the story of J. C. Philpot and Wm. Tiptaft* (London, Vol. 1, 1930; *Banner of Truth* abridgement, 1964).
4. W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London, 1972).
5. The early brethren did, however, face the "pentecostal challenge" of Irvingism. I hope to consider their response, God willing, in a future article.
6. See, e.g. David Watson, *I believe in the Church* (London, 1978).
7. It would be instructive also to compare the reasons for secession advanced by certain quite closely related, but distinct, evangelical seceders. (i) Thomas Kelly the hymn-writer, who left the C. of I. in the 1790s over the principle of establishment. See Acheson, *op. cit.* pp. 119ff. (ii) John Walker, Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, who seceded about 1804 and established several highly exclusive little dissenting meetings in Dublin and elsewhere on "apostolic principles". (iii) J. C. Philpot of Oxford who almost certainly had contact with Darby between 1826 and 1831 and seceded in 1835. None of these merged with "brethren". Walker's appears to be the most interesting comparison, but for this article it has been possible to research only Philpot's views, which are readily accessible in his extensive surviving ministry and correspondence.
8. See J. H. Philpot, *op. cit.* and especially J. C. Philpot's *Letter to the Provost of Worcester College, Oxford*, reprinted as an appendix to foregoing.
9. Geoffrey Best, "The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the early Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Theological Studies* (1959), p. 64.
10. Again I allude to J. C. Philpot. See e.g. his famous sermon, *Winter afore Harvest* (Harpenden, reprinted 1978), pp. 40ff.
11. See Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland 1800-70* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 83-127. The quotation is from p. 106.
12. *Ibid.* pp. 1-16.
13. The *Charge* is reprinted in Magee's *Works* (London, 2 vols., 1842), Vol. 2; the quotation is cited however from Bowen, p. 89.

14. Dissent was growing more rapidly at this than at any other time. See Robert Currie *et al. Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford 1977), pp. 25, 65, 161-2. It was a major, if unremarked, precipitant of Tractarianism.
15. See Acheson, *op. cit.*

CONFIDENCE

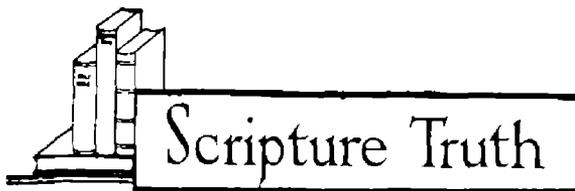
Both the Father and the Son
 Us befriend, and none can take us;
 Far too much for us have done
 Now to leave us or forsake us.
 Oh! what confidence is this:
 Jesus tells me *I am His*.

Will my timid heart withstand
 When by trouble sore dejected?
 Jesus reaches forth His hand;
Strength in weakness is perfected.
 Faith must find this witness true;
I through Christ can all things do.

Let me see my nothingness
 In my daily pathway proven,
 Learn my Saviour's name to bless,
 Live by faith of Christ in heaven,
 Less of me, and more of Thee,
 In this earthen vessel be.

Lord, Thou liv'st, Thou liv'st to God;
 Every foe fore'er defeated.
 Here where Thou did'st strive to blood
 And wast shamefully entreated,
 Here, mid daily care I taste
 All the grace of my High Priest.

from the German



(incorporating *Words of Help*)

JULY, 1982

ON RE-READING SOME EARLY TRACTS BY J. N. DARBY

T. BALDERSTON

2. THE ARGUMENT

Darby was a less than lucid writer. This is an attempt to explain the message of three of his earliest tracts.

On 10th October 1826 the Archbishop of Dublin, William Magee, delivered a *Charge* to the clergy of his province. He took as his subject, "the first principles of our church establishment . . . the grounds on which, as a portion of the church of Christ, of the true Catholic church, we stand connected with the state"¹. The circumstances which induced him to take up that particular subject at that point in time should be clear to readers of my first article. Archbishop Magee himself conceived of his *Charge* as a kind of revision lesson for his clergy, to make them, "the better able to expose the fallacies, which fraud [i.e. Romanism] would impose on ignorance [i.e. the peasantry] to our detriment; and to deprive fanaticism [i.e. revivalist religion], cupidity, and irreligion, of those false colours, under which they wage their unhallowed warfare against the established religion of the country".

The thesis of the *Charge* is this. The established church of England and Ireland is that form of religion which harmonises best with the well-being of the state. Any other form either (i) sets up a two-headed state with two independent and potentially conflicting authorities — the religious and the secular. Such was the danger of both "Rome and Geneva". Or (ii) it so denies the state right of intervention in things spiritual, and the church right of comment upon things temporal, that the moral and religious foundation of the state itself is destroyed, and the fabric of society reduced to relationships merely maintained out of self-interest or fear. This was the danger of independency. The genius of English religion was its perfect marrying of church and state as "two aspects of the same Christian community" wherein religion was to the state "as the soul to the body"². This harmony was founded upon the acknowledgement of "a *sovereign supremacy within the realm*, not to be interfered with by any extrinsic power, not to be resisted by any domestic impediment".

This unitary sovereignty belonged to the King, and the assertion of it was, in Magee's view, one of the great gains of the Reformation.

The implication of this harmony was that the ministers of the

established church were not merely "a body pursuing their own ends, and to be considered merely in their individual relations. Contemplated in their temporal capacity, they must be looked on as the instruments of the state, for its great objects; bound up in it for the public good; and maintained by it on a public principle, and by means not left to individual option . . .".

The rest of the *Charge* amplifies this thesis in necessary and interesting ways, taking up matters such as subjection to Scripture, and the preservation of the Protestant right of private judgment. But these need not be pursued here.

The Archbishop's *Charge* was followed only a short time later by a Petition from the clergy of the province to the House of Commons for protection. I have no independent information upon its contents³. Presumably the atmosphere of controversy, perhaps violence against their persons in remoter Catholic districts where resentment against the tithe was rising, and fear that agitation for civil emancipation was but a pretext to get rid of establishment, induced them to ask Parliament for a vigorous reassertion of their rights and privileges, and maybe for a more instant police protection.

Many Irish evangelical clergy put their signatures to the Petition⁴. But the young curate of Calary took up his pen to oppose it. What he wrote — *Considerations addressed to the Archbishop of Dublin and the Clergy who signed the Petition to the House of Commons for Protection* — now forms the first item in his *Collected Writings*. He wrote the pamphlet after reading the *Charge* and the Petition, but before hearing of the Archbishop's third disconcerting act — namely his imposition of an oath of loyalty to the crown upon converts from Rome on their admission to the established church. Internal evidence is decisive on this point⁵. The oath was, in Darby's view, the logical consequence of the Petition; it was the clergy's *quid pro quo* for the protection they sought. That it staunched the flow of converts can well be imagined. It seems to have been the event that finally goaded the young Darby, after "sitting on" his manuscript for some months, into having it printed and circulated to the clergy. But he had already written it before hearing about the oath. To object *only* when something impeded the reception of the gospel by the hearers would have been, we might say, to take the ground Whitefield and Wesley had taken. Mr. D., however, objected to something that weakened public conformity to the gospel on the part of the preachers. There was a great work going on in Ireland — his tract started from this fact and constantly recurred to it. This work would cease, he believed, if the clergy claimed a position, privileges and protection inconsistent with the gospel. He assumed that their character and relations in which they stood as ministers of Christ were the things that determined the course of the gospel. "Impossible that they can gather the fruit of His blessed suffering and divine labour, so as to be glorified with Him by the display of it as the fruit of the travail of His soul, but as His labourers, as working in conformity with the spirit in which He wrought" (p.4*). It was to be a momentous assumption.

*Page numbers in parenthesis refer to the *Collected Writings of J. N., Darby, Stow Hill Edn., Vol. 1.*

Why did he take a different view of the *Charge and Petition* from the rest of his evangelical brethren? Differing conceptions of the church divided them. To the evangelicals, the Archbishop's actions (except perhaps the last; it is hard to conceive that they were altogether happy about the "loyal oath") belonged to the sphere of the "visible church", to the sphere of profession. It was right that the visible church be held in public esteem and that it in turn use its influence to promote social contentment, loyalty to the crown, etc. It was right that the clergy, as members of the establishment, demand respect and privilege; the social order would crumble if they didn't. Evangelical clergy believed that they could act schizophrenically — claiming, in their public capacities as members of the establishment, the world's respect and support, yet more privately, as ministers of the gospel, eschewing this world's honours.

Mr. D. evidently did not believe this. As minister, as member, the believer's place is defined for him as regards heaven and as regards this world, by *Christ* crucified and ascended. Now since the question of what was due to the church had got mixed up in this matter, he was compelled to open his direct analysis of the Archbishop's *Charge* with a criticism of the theory of the church that underlay it, and of what distinguished the true church from the Papacy; and to state his own, contrasting view⁶:

"What is the Church of Christ in its purpose and perfection? . . . It is a congregation of souls redeemed out of 'this naughty world' by God manifest in the flesh, a people purified to Himself by Christ . . . knit together, by the bond of this common faith in Him, to Him their Head sitting at the right hand of the Father, having consequently their conversation (*commonwealth*) in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour . . . As a body therefore, they belong to heaven . . . On earth they are, as a people, necessarily subordinate; They are nothing and nobody . . . As such, consequently, they have no power . . . They are delivered in spirit out of this present evil world, and become heavenly, spiritual in their connections . . . while their habits on earth are those, by necessary consequence, of pilgrims and strangers, adorning (by consistent humility, gentleness, patience and kindness) the grace of which they have been made partakers, through faith which works by love. . . ."

"What is the Papacy? Satan's fiction to answer all this. While men are kept down in the lowest desires of a depraved world . . . it presents a head on earth, earthly in his interests and in his objects, knitting together in a body, not a people separated out of the world to spiritual objects, but one tied by the closest interests to maintain his earthly supremacy . . . precluding the application of the divine word, the instrument of divine sovereignty, to the souls of men. In short, the system of Popery I look upon as an entire counterpart of the Christian scheme, set up by Satan on the decay of faith to hold its place, uniting men to an earthly head and to each other by those interests from which Christianity delivers. . . ." (pp. 5-6).

The papacy then, was Satan's counterfeit — the mirror image in the dust of the earth, of the heavenly features of the church. It is an exceedingly interesting analysis. It makes conflict inevitable between the ministers of Christ and the Romanists, and exposes the dangers attendant on this conflict. To Darby, the minister of the gospel had but a single calling — to save souls out of this world by the word of God, to gather them together unto Christ and to edify them when gathered (pp. 6-7). The powerful ministry of the word naturally brings them into collision with the papacy (what Irish preacher did not know this from

his own experience?), but at this point a snare lay beside their path, to deflect gospel ministers from their true course of duty. For the arrogant temporal claims of Rome also inevitably brought it into conflict with the civil power which objected to its claim for a share of its sovereignty⁷. The danger was that the gospel minister be tempted to ally with the civil opponent of the papacy. But he could not claim the protection of the state, on the ground that the state would gain by supporting him, and remain "the unshackled servant of Jesus Christ". The state would exact its price for this protection (pp. 6-8, 15). Most importantly, the minister of the gospel would be required to relinquish the proper sovereignty that belongs to the word of God alone; he must relinquish the right of that Word to establish itself wherever the Lord open the door, irrespective of the effect on civil order and the social fabric. He must "dwindle Christianity into a system harmonised with a particular community for the purposes of its moral happiness". But "it is surely, for this is the result — a strange way of opposing Satan's wiles, to give up the claim and possession [i.e. the supremacy of the word of God] by which alone he can be overcome" (p. 10).

Furthermore, a minister of the gospel will inevitably have to "degrade" himself to merely a "minister of moral order" (p. 11). Preaching the gospel inevitably brings reproach, slander, evil report. Those who preach it cannot possibly constitute the ideal "cement of the social fabric" from the state's point of view. For this function the state requires men who are generally respected, whose "worldly credit" is high (p. 12).

Finally, in seeking the support of the state, the ministers have evaded the reproach of Christ, which is their honour and glory. "Why should my beloved brethren . . . choose a lower place, choose not to have the fellowship of His sufferings? . . . I think that it will be found that *practically* a right faith mainly consists in seeing the glory of Christ in His humiliation — I mean that [faith] by which a redeemed soul lives in the flesh . . . Glory in the world is essentially contrary to faith" (p. 17).

We have reached an important conclusion. Ministers of the gospel had been deflected from a right discharge of their calling by a false view of the relations in which the church stood. Thus they have been seduced into trying to fight a worldly power with worldly weapons — by social esteem and police protection, and to throw away their own weapon — the word of God — "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). Had they understood their heavenly calling and that its necessary correlate on earth was the uncomplaining acceptance of Christ's place of humiliation here, they would not have done so, and the word of God would have run in that free course marked out by God in His sovereignty.

History has consigned Mr. D's tract to oblivion. Almost no evangelical clergy, it seems, took the least notice of it. Magee was accounted a friend of the evangelicals; he had favoured their cause in a number of ways⁸. Why should they offend him?

Deep exercise of soul lay between the circulation of the first tract

and the composition of the second. In this exercise, he tells us, "I learned by divine teaching what the Lord says in John 14, "In that day ye shall know . . . that ye are in me, and I in you" — that I was one with Christ before God, and I found peace . . . The same truth brought me out of the Establishment. I saw that the true church was composed of those who were thus united to Christ" (p. 36). On leaving the Established Church he published the tract now before us — *Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ*⁹. His exercise of soul had brought into focus a matter which the first tract had left in confusion. In that tract he had objected strenuously to recourse to the privileges of establishment yet he was, plainly, extremely reluctant to reject the establishment, its hierarchy, etc., as such. This want of consistency was cleared up by the time he wrote *Nature and Unity* through the deep discovery briefly described in his own words above. If the subject of the first tract had been "the true relations of the servant", the subject of the second would be "the true communion of saints".

In this tract he now treats the established church as a body which, for all its undoubted service to the truth, met on "other and different grounds" from the true church (p. 22). The Reformation may have secured the authority of the Word "as that on which the soul could rest itself"; it had not secured a true reformation in the constitution of the church, for it had been too mixed up "with human agency" for that to have happened. As a result "much of the old system remained" (p. 21). Thus it came about that "that has in general been called *the Church* which has been received as such by the rulers of this world, not those who were delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (pp. 21-2). When revival came and those awakened wanted to act more thoroughly in subjection to the Word, they were forced into Dissent by the apostasy of what took to itself the title, and occupied the ground, of *the church*. Mr. D. does not trace the subsequent history of dissenting bodies at this point; further down however he asserts that in his own day their aim was to muscle in on the "secular advantages and honours of that world out of which the Lord came to redeem us" just as the established church aimed to keep these advantages for herself (p. 32). Dissenters, as the established church, had become "of this world as a body" (p. 27)¹⁰.

All this had

"an anomalous and trying consequence; namely that the true Church of God has no avowed communion at all. . . . Individuals of the children of God are to be found in all the different denominations . . . but where is their bond of union? It is not that unbelieving professors are mixed up with the people of God in *their* communion [italics mine; this was the prevalent understanding of the "visible church" — T.B.] but that the bond of communion is not the *unity* of the people of God, but really (in point of fact) their *differences*. . . . The people of God are found as individuals, among bodies of professing Christians, joined in communion upon other and different grounds" (p. 22).

The "ground of gathering", that is to say, of the great denominations was one which in principle made no distinction between real and purely nominal believers, but did make distinctions on other and worldly matters, so that believers had no fellowship with each other

as believers. Where was this fellowship to be sought?

Believers had attempted a variety of remedies. Mr. D. itemises the evangelical interdenominational societies, earlier secessions, and a formal union of Protestant churches (pp. 22-5). This last did not meet the case at all, and the first two were less than satisfactory. When we compare them with what he proposes as the true remedy — the true communion of saints — their deficiencies become obvious.

True unity was not to be realised in the abstractions of the “invisible church”; believers were “so to be all one, as that the *world* might know that Jesus was sent of God” (p. 24). It can, however, only be produced in the inward power of the Spirit. Those who seek it must frame their meetings together in such a way as “to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son” (p. 25), renouncing insistence on “things indifferent” (p. 31). How is this to be done? By gathering together simply as “two or three” in His name (p. 25) and by finding in “*His* death the centre of communion till His coming again . . . in this rests the whole power of the truth” (p. 27). The “outward symbol and instrument of unity is the partaking of the Lord’s supper”. This expresses “the character and life of the church, that in which the truth of its existence subsists”, because “the essence and substance of unity . . . is conformity to His death” (*ibid.*). By practical conformity to His death they witness to the glory into which Christ is risen (p. 28); only insofar as the Lord’s glory is their sole object, will the true unity of the people of God be found — and that glory is manifested against all the glory of man (p. 29).

Thus, what was presented in the first tract as the only true basis of service — namely, the place where Christ’s cross has put believers outside the world — is presented in the second tract as the only true ground of gathering. This is the only place where believer meets believer *as believer*; here alone therefore is that truly catholic ground constituted to embrace *all* the children of God. Another point implicit in the first tract is also taken up here: if we lack inward conformity to Christ, if our hearts are wrongly directed, then we have *nothing* — we are merely playing at church. There is no “visible church” of the sort that goes on regardless of our state of soul, for us to fall back on. Practical conformity to Christ’s death in the power of the Spirit is the solemn line running through both of the first two tracts.

The circumstances which gave rise to the third¹¹ and final tract we shall consider were, as in the case of the first, those of a threat to the gospel. The particular vexation this time was a crisis in the affairs of the recently founded Irish Established Church Home Mission¹². The activities of this Mission — particularly its forays into the parishes of unsympathetic clergy — had provoked the opposition of the bishops. Because of this opposition, the evangelical clergy had dropped it. In doing so, they acted according to their soundest traditions. Evangelical clergy were the successors of those who, in the late eighteenth century, had deliberately decided *not* to associate with the Methodist movements because these, by infringing clerical jurisdictions, had provoked schism. It was not surprising that in the 1830s the Irish

successors of these men dropped like a hot brick a new Mission of the same tendency.

But alas! The Home Mission, instead of withering, flourished. One clergyman had carried on, helped by a growing band of laymen. And this presented a new danger. For as Methodism had already succeeded in drawing large numbers away from the Church, so also might the Home Mission, if it went into outright schism. This placed the evangelical clergy in an acute dilemma. They resolved it by taking up the Mission once more, but on a new basis: henceforth only clergy would preach. Thus they hoped to steer a cautious middle course¹³. By insisting on clerical monopoly they hoped to conciliate the bishops (even while still disregarding parochial jurisdictions), and at the same time to rein in the schismatic impulses of revival by exerting their own positive leadership over it. But there were not enough suitable clergy to man all the preaching stations; so the work had to be curtailed. Thus evangelical clergy were themselves policing the work of the gospel in an attempt to satisfy a godless hierarchy. They were charging those who preached without ordination with disorder and schism. To J.N.D., these were serious charges. They constituted blasphemy or, as he then expressed it, sin against the Holy Ghost on the pattern of Matthew 12:22-23.

What gave rise to this extraordinary state of affairs? The *notion* of clergyman, was Darby's answer — and he incorporated this phrase into the title of his tract. The fact that *godly men* were fighting against the gospel (p. 44; cp. p. 37) proved that the problem did not lie in the apostasy of a few prominent individuals, or even in the "latitudinarianism" of the mass of clergy (as might have been concluded in Whitefield or Wesley's day). The fault lay in adherence to the very concept of clerisy itself.

This concept consisted in "acknowledging that, as the source of authority, which . . . is not appointed by God at all" (p. 41). It was "the substitution of anything which is of man, *and therefore subject to Satan*, in the place and prerogative of that blessed Spirit exercising the vicarship of Christ" (p. 38, italics mine). It is the necessary root of that denial of the Holy Ghost by whose power and presence this dispensation is characterised and must, by the blasphemy it involves, end in its dissolution. God may in providence have overruled it, but it will be "the very cause of the destruction of the church" (pp. 38-9).

Why so? Can God not sanctify human arrangements for the conduct of His church? This objection brings us to the crux of the matter. It would be levelled against his argument today, and it was in that day the ground on which protestant Anglicanism stood, with its deep scepticism of high theories of the apostolic succession. It is remarkable that it had so little cogency to Mr. D's mind that he did not even stop to dispose of it. Its cogency evaporated once a vital pre-supposition had been granted — namely the fierce, unremitting hostility of the mind of man to the things of God. This belief, learned in Scripture, had been worked out in experience through the strenuous exercises of his own soul, and abundantly confirmed to him by the eight years' history of the gospel in Ireland since 1826. He wrote for

those whose knowledge of this history, and, more than that, of their own hearts, gave them an immediate sense of the rightness of his argument. He offered no nice, abstract analysis of clerisy; he did not even generalise his argument to cover dissenting ministries, though plainly he was no more sympathetic with them. And if we do not share his sense of the contrariety between the "mind of the flesh" and the "mind of the Spirit", neither shall we understand his vehement objection to granting man in the flesh, as such, rights in the church of God. We shall not accept that, first individually, then collectively, no provision is to be made for that man, *no* confidence placed in him.

But, it may further be objected, there is no work undertaken in the service of God which the flesh does not, somehow, contaminate. Mr. D's argument would, if taken literally, invalidate *all* gospel preaching.

This objection misses his point, but it enables us to bring that point into sharper focus. True, the flesh is always there; constant, hard self-judgment is always necessary, and yet in spite of all failure creeps in. But in this tract Darby was not dealing with weakness, nor with the accidental, unintended failure of the servant; he was not even dealing with the corruption of an originally good system by the faithlessness of its present incumbents — this has already been made clear. Mr. D. was concerned with a deliberate, conscious acquiescence in an error necessarily accepted by all. The right of man — unregenerate man — to determine who could, and who could not, preach was necessarily¹⁴ accepted by all Anglican ordinands; it could not be questioned without denying the whole validity of that communion, nor repented of without renouncing orders entirely. In the first tract Mr. D. had urged evangelical clergy to reject the worldly character which the Archbishop was trying to foist on them. In this tract he admits that, by the very fact that they were clergy, they could not but possess that character. It was the treacherous bridge between the church and the world. By their false view of what the church is, evangelical clergy had been seduced, not merely into accepting it, but even into upholding it.

NOTES

1. The quotations from the *Charge* are taken from William Magee, *Works* (London, 2 vols. 1842), vol. 2, pp. 464, 465, 467, 474.
2. This is the traditional Anglican theory of church and state associated with the name of Richard Hooker.
3. Excerpts from it are quoted in Darby's *Considerations*. See his *Collected Writings*, Stow Hill edn. (hereafter C.W.), vol. 1, p. 13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
5. Darby did add a postscript to his manuscript, about the oath.
6. In relating Darby's *Considerations* to the Archbishop's *Charge* we must bear in mind that he was not aiming at convincing the Archbishop, but in extricating evangelical clergy from the false position *they* had got into by subscribing to it, showing that the *Charge* was inconsistent with the gospel they professed. Though nominally addressed to the Archbishop, it was actually addressed to them (p. 5).
7. History did not vindicate his analysis. Nevertheless the C. of I. acted on this assumption — in this he was correct.
8. A. R. Acheson, "The Evangelicals in the Church of Ireland, 1784-1859" (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 1967), pp. 152, 162, 220ff.

9. The biographical details are taken from C.W., vol. 1, pp. 36-8.
10. Most evangelical seceders at that time had a low opinion of the mass of dissent. J. C. Philpot may speak for many when he distinguished "godly dissent" from "worldly dissent".
11. Mr. D. wrote other tracts between *Nature and Unity* and *Notion* but they do not bear on our subject. To understand *Notion*, one must also consult, *Thoughts on the Present Position of the Home Mission, and Parochial Arrangements destructive of Order in the Church* — both in C.W., vol. 1.
12. Sufficient of its history can be gleaned from the tracts referred to in the last note. See also Acheson, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 227ff.
13. Mr. D. attributed their act to self-importance (see p. 44). The explanation offered here seems more likely.
14. *Necessarily*, because to be ordained one must accept the validity of the action of a bishop appointed by ministers of the crown acting in their secular capacities. See pp. 40-1, 81ff.

DIVINE WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT

R. A. CREETH

Moses warned that the dispensation of law would end in utter failure on man's part — and so it did. Paul voiced the same warning about the day of grace — and so it has happened. Nevertheless, the faithfulness of God never changes; His calling is sure and His word an infallible guide to our path.

It has often been pointed out that whatever has been entrusted to man ends in ruin and failure. After the initial vigour and freshness of that which was originally set up by God, decline soon sets in and the outcome is apostasy. One writer expresses it this way, "There is no community that has been able to retain in its original freshness and power any truth beyond that generation to which it was first committed". Blessing has been given, but man has not been able to retain it, and it has slipped away in the second generation. As time went on deadly error has crept in, and what seemed so fair at the beginning has ended in utter corruption.

This is man's sad history as sketched for us in many parts of the scriptures. Yet it is encouraging to lay hold of this, that in spite of man's failure God remains ever the same in the fulness of His love and grace towards His failing children. He abides the Faithful and Unchanging One, and He says to His people, "For I Jehovah change not, and ye, sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6, New Tr. of J.N.D.).

Moses in his day gives warning of the apostasy that would ultimately prevail among the people of God. Having received from Jehovah Himself a prophetic outline of the wilful declension of the people (see Deuteronomy 31:16-21), he gathered together all the elders of the tribes and the officers, and plainly said to them, "For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands" (verse 29).

How striking that this solemn denunciation of Israel's ultimate

failure is followed by the magnificent song of the next chapter in which God's faithfulness and unchanging grace are so clearly and beautifully portrayed! Man's failure and sin cannot alter God's tender concern for His people. How great was Israel's sin, yet how great is our God in His love for His people! "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God", sang Moses. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."

How did the people respond to God's goodness towards them? "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation." Yet how tenderly does God regard His wayward people! "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in a waste, howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." How sad that in spite of all God's tender care and solicitude for the welfare of His people they should so stubbornly turn aside! "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked . . . then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation."

Has not all this a solemn voice to us in this present day? Do we enjoy God's rich and constant blessings, and lose sight of the Giver? Do we lightly esteem the Rock of our salvation by failing to recognise the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit in our midst when we are gathered together? Another has written, "We lose the sweet and precious sense of His presence and of His perfect sufficiency, and turn to other objects as Israel did to false gods. How often we forget the Rock that begat us, the God that formed us, the Lord that redeemed us" (C.H.M.).

There is a striking parallel between the address of Moses to the elders of Israel and the address of Paul to the elders of Ephesus. Compare Deuteronomy 31:29 and Acts 20:29. The aged apostle says, "For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Thus the apostle warns the Ephesian elders of the sad departure that would come in, when the flock of God would be torn and ravaged by wicked men. What is his resource with such a sad prospect before him? "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified."

The aged apostle was about to leave them, and they were sorrowing that they would see his face no more. So he places them in the care of God, the ever faithful and unchanging God who would never fail them, and he assures them too of their resource in the infallible and divinely-inspired word of His grace. Thus would they be built up and edified, and be given an inheritance among all the sanctified ones, those who are set apart to God. Thus we are forewarned that just as the dispensation of the law closed with utter failure and ruin on man's part, so will the present dispensation of God's grace end in total apostasy. But let us remember that God remains the same, and our resource is in Himself and the sufficiency of

His grace.

The second epistle to Timothy is the last message of the apostle, and there he warns of the perilous times that would characterise the last days, which are surely made the more dangerous by men "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). The name of God is attached to the abominations of men! But again we are reminded of our resource — the holy scriptures in an increasingly evil day. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

In chapter 1 the apostle speaks of himself as being deserted by the main body of the saints in Asia. "This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Yet he would remind Timothy, and ourselves, of our heavenly and eternal portion which can never be taken from us. This consists of our salvation and our calling. "Who hath 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." How encouraging and assuring it is that all the breakdown of the church in responsibility down here cannot change the settled purpose of God for our blessing. All was determined before sin came in, and has been "made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings" (2 Timothy 1:9-10, N.Tr. of J.N.D.).

Jude too gives us a fearful picture of the apostasy of the last days, but encourages the saints with the beautiful exhortation, "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." And he closes his epistle with the doxology, "But to Him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before His glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages" (New Tr. of J.N.D.).

Let us then give serious heed to the solemn warnings of scripture, and seek to walk in separation from the increasing evil around us. At the same time may we be encouraged as we find our constant resource in God's unfailing grace and in the assurance of the glory yet to be revealed.

3. THE WORLD OUTSIDE AND THE WORLD WITHIN

In the "world" outside him the Christian meets an external opposition to the divine testimony, but he also finds in his own heart an ever-present tendency to love that world, to lust after it.

The World Outside: John 15 : 18 — 16 : 11

The previous article ended with the observation that in John's writings we find the clear delineation of the world as man's order of things in opposition to Christ and God.

The verses suggested speak clearly of the world outside the company who belong to Christ. Believers are aliens, strangers, pilgrims, foreigners in this world.

The key thought that lies in this passage is that the world's treatment of those who are Christ's is completely consistent with its treatment of Christ Himself. They will treat us as they treated Him.

For connection, look back to the end of chapter 14. In the last two verses the Lord's separation from the world is most marked. (1) There is nothing in Him which would put Him under the power of the prince of this world. (2) He has everything which links Him with the Father — a love for the Father demonstrated by obedience to His bidding.

Now if we look down to verse 10 of chapter 15 we see that the life pattern of the disciple is based on the Lord's example, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love". The intervening verses about the vine are to be read in this context. They do not concern the sovereign act of God in grace for salvation, but with the discipline of children by a Father in relation to obedience and fruit-bearing. What is lost is not salvation but the conscious knowledge of the Father's love, approval and support.

Verses 15-17 continue the thought of intimacy between the Lord and the disciples. They are friends, chosen by Him with all the Father's resources available to them as they were to Him. So they should love one another.

These precious links with the Father and with Christ however, set them apart from the world, and call out its opposition and hatred. The attitude of the world is one of hatred and ignorance shown by the 'ifs' in these verses.

(i) Hated because *they are Christ's*. "If the world hate you" (v. 18). The Lord Himself was the initial object of that hatred. He was the Light of the world but men loved darkness. We should not be surprised if the world hates us who are His, as this is only a confirmation that they see Him in us.

(ii) Hatred because *they are not of the world*. "If ye were of the world the world would love its own" (v. 19). The very fact that the Lord has chosen them out of the world is further cause for its hatred.

Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. While he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter he was accepted, but as soon as he refused this place and accepted links with the people of God he was persecuted.

(iii) *Persecution and rejection*. In verse 18 the hatred was because of who He was. In verse 20 it is because of His words and deeds. The servant's path will be the same. They rejected the testimony of the works and words of the Lord. The disciples will be treated the same. This was seen in Acts 5:41: "they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name".

(iv) *Wilful ignorance*. "If I had not come and spoken unto them" (v. 22); "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did" (v. 24) then they could have pleaded ignorance and not had sin.

The Lord had come in grace, not imputing sin, but revealing the love of God and the heart of the Father. And having seen Him and the Father they hated both; now there was no escape for them. God can have nothing more to say to them.

We need not be surprised when a Christian noted for his good works and trustworthiness is persecuted by fellow workers. They hated *Him* without a cause (1 Peter 4:14-16).

The action of the *Holy Spirit* also clearly distinguishes the believer from the world. His work in the believer is:

1. To magnify Christ (v. 26).
2. To give assurance of relationship. The Spirit of adoption "whereby we cry Abba Father" (Romans 8:15).
3. To lead into all truth as the Spirit of truth (v. 26).
4. To give hope of future glory, as the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14).

In 1 Peter 4:14 we read that "The Spirit of Glory and of God resteth on you". Therefore He is the *Comforter*. But to the world He is the *Convictor*. "*Of sin* because they believe not on me" (John 16:9). The greatest possible sin is to refuse to believe on One Whom God has sent. *Of righteousness* — "because I go to my Father" (v. 10). The world cast Him out as a blasphemer — they only cast Him back into the presence of the glory of the One who had sent Him. Saul of Tarsus had to learn this. "The question God asks of the world is — 'Where is My Son. What have you done to Him?' " (J.N.D.). *Of judgment* — "because the prince of this world is judged" (v. 11). Judgment is already passed on Satan the prince of this world. How then will Satan's dupes escape the wrath of God?

While to believers the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Counsel for the defence, to the world He is Convictor, the Counsel for the prosecution.

This again separates us from the world. What a glorious position is ours — not of this world, but chosen out of the world, given by the Father to the Son, out of the world, but brought into all the love of the Father "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in

them, and I in them” (John 17:26).

The World Within: 1 John 2:15-17

The basic exhortation covering these verses is — *love not the world*. We must ask ourselves “what does *love* in this verse mean?” If we read chapter 3:1 and 4:7-11 in this same epistle, we learn that love here is not an emotional feeling but an attitude of will leading to action. It involves committing one’s affections, interests, resources, talents, obedience, time, money, and loyalty — to the world.

Secondly, what is *the world* in these verses? It clearly is not the physical world, for that would contradict many scriptures in the Psalms and elsewhere. Nor is it just the people of the world — for God “so loved” the world in this sense. It is the world of man organised under Satan. Chapter 5:19 tells us that “the whole world lieth in wickedness [or, the wicked One]”.

Perhaps we feel that we could satisfy this part of 2:15, but it goes on “neither the *things* that are in the world”. A Christian can never be a materialist and be true to his calling.

Then we have three great reasons given. In each of these there is a stark contrast between the world and God (v. 15b, 16, 17), twice in connection with the Father, when affection is concerned, and once as God, when obedience is concerned.

Reason 1. “If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.” This does not mean that the Father does not love him nor even that he does not love the Father, but that to love the world is a complete denial of the whole object of the Father’s love, which was to bring us to the place of children of God — “therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not” (cp. 3:1). The world’s approval and the Father’s object in love are completely incompatible.

Reason 2. “All that is in the world is not of the Father but is of the world.” Notice the word ‘lust’. With the blessed Lord there was nothing in His spotless person to which the attractions of the world could appeal. With fallen man there is. These were the temptations the Devil used against Eve:

The lust of the flesh — not necessarily evil things but the satisfaction of bodily needs for their own sake. Eve was not hungry, as all else in the garden was available to her. She ate just because it seemed ‘good for food’. Contrast the Lord’s reply, “Man shall not live by bread alone”. So the children of Israel “tested God in their heart by asking food according to their desire” (Psalm 78:18).

The lust of the eyes. The devil showed the Lord all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time — “all this authority will I give thee and the glory of them, if thou wilt therefore worship me”. This was not a geographical panorama but an historical summary of all the kingdoms that had held sway in the world, I believe. The Day of the Lord is prophesied when all will be given into His hand, but before that could happen those blessed hands had to be pierced. Satan’s subtle suggestion was the throne without the Cross, but at what a price! The

Lord's answer showed His complete obedience to the word of God. "Get thee behind me Satan" (i.e. where I cannot see you). "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve."

A brief note on 'seeing' and the danger involved might be added here. In Genesis 3:6 the woman "saw that the tree was good for food". In Genesis 13:10 Lot lifted up his eyes and *beheld* all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere. In Joshua 7:21, Achan said, "When I saw amongst the spoils a beautiful Babylonish garment". In Judges 14:1 Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman of Timnah; and in Judges 16:1 he went to Gaza and saw there a harlot. From the roof David saw a woman washing herself (2 Samuel 11:2).

Let us be careful what we see — whether in real life, or via television.

As a contrast note the effect when eyes are on the Lord. Consider Luke 5:8: "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". Shortly after, "they forsook all and followed him" (v. 11). We read in John 20:20 "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord".

The third temptation the devil uses is *the pride of life*. "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble." The Lord "humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him."

There can be no pride in the presence of God. Satan tempts us in one way or another to make much of ourselves. God desires that we make much of Christ and glorify God. Pride is the character of Satan. Humility is the character of Christ. All who have seen God in vision have been humble — Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Paul, John.

Reason 3. "The world passeth away and the lust of it but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Whatever the world can give, it is only temporary. The very world itself is not permanent. It is passing away. From the point of view of our experience it is man who passes out of the world taking nothing out of it. But even taking into account man's eternal existence the world can never be his home, nor bring satisfaction, for it itself passes away.

WEAK ON FACTS: A CRITICAL COMMENT

In January of this year one of the editors (T.B.) published some "Observations: A Change in Temper". We have received the following comments upon them from Dr. G. A. C. Binnie.

It was with interest that I read *Scripture Truth's* venture from its usual articles in "Observations: A Change in Temper" in your January issue; but it was with some regret that I was left with the impression that it was weak on objective facts, but strong on subjective impressions — although there were signs of an evangelical revival in this country, it was not all it should be, and was certainly not as correct as those of yesteryear.

!Since my student days I have been blessed in my associations with the Scripture Union (S.U.) and the University and Colleges Christian Fellowship (U.C.C.F.), formerly the Inter Varsity Fellowship (I.V.F.). Your anonymous author implies that they are the same basic organisation; to the best of my knowledge any connection between them is

that of coincidence of authors and beliefs.

The S.U.'s best known activity is the production of Bible reading aids, now into its second century, and these have certainly lent discipline to my own Scripture reading, which without such an aid usually seemed to founder in mid-Leviticus. Its other principal activity is as a publishing house of Christian literature, and I find it difficult to see in either activity evidence of "an organisational and intellectual type of Christianity" — unless it be in the fact that increasingly the notes are written by ordained ministers, which might be a reflection on the Brethren of today. Your author also advised "a glance at the stocks of any S.U. bookshop" to see that fundamentalism is less strong in evangelicalism than it used to be. Could he not have quoted at least one item to which he objected? Possibly S.U. bookshops sell items other than "straight" Christian literature, but I understand that most Christian bookshops have to do this or to be heavily subsidised.

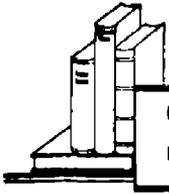
Secondly your contributor takes the U.C.C.F. to task because of its intellectual involvement in academic theology despite the admitted fact that there is an increasing flow of committed Christian clergymen from the Universities and Colleges as a result of this involvement. I would mention that the Lord met the Sadducees with arguments from their own teaching, and that Paul quoted the Greek poet Epimenedes to the Athenians. I should think that releasing young Christians into the field of rational theology with no academic back-up will receive the reward it seems to get — student Christians with "their evangelical nonsense knocked out of them" by the time they graduated, to quote a modernistic divine, Professor William Barclay. Paul taught and convinced, and I believe that the academic side of U.C.C.F. has sought to do this in the academic world with faithfulness to the basic truths of the Faith as revealed in the Bible, including "consensus" doctrine. Your Observer appears to feel that this is not so but does not support his case with facts supported by references.

Finally, the Observations refer to the Charismatic movement; I have to admit that my only contact was a solitary campaign meeting when I was in Harrogate on a course, and I would welcome an authoritative and properly referenced review of the subject. But any faith in the objectivity of the "Observations" is damaged by the remark that the "older pentecostals were mainly fundamentalist": A. J. Pollock in *Modern Pentecostalism* had no doubts about the unscriptural background of the Pentecostalism of the 1930s.

I know that *Scripture Truth* prefers facts and not impressions, but it seems historically obvious that the trends to Methodism in the eighteenth century were different from those to the Brethren of the nineteenth century. Perhaps if history is written a century hence, a "change of temper" will fit into the perspective of the Spirit of God blowing where it listeth. Adherence to the truth and allowing the Spirit to direct us will allow us to see more clearly our place in God's plans.

G. A. C. BINNIE

Editorial Note: In fairness to the U.C.C.F. the apparent identification of its views with those attacked by Lindsell in *Battle for the Bible* should be rectified (see January issue, p. 207). *Battle for the Bible* is about abandonment of the doctrine of inerrancy by many evangelicals in America. My criticism of the U.C.C.F. *per se* however is not that it has consciously abandoned this doctrine, but that it has accepted the need to interpret Scripture by the methods of "higher criticism", provided that these can be made to yield "conservative" results. I think the latter leads to the former, but the two things ought not to have been implicitly identified. Shorn of the footnote, the text of p. 207 remains, in my judgement, true. — T.B.



Scripture Truth

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

SEPTEMBER, 1982

THE TRUE VINE

COLIN CURRY

**“I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”
“I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me,
and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without
me ye can do nothing.” — (John 15:1, 5)**

With this article Dr. Curry reaches the last of the “I am” sayings of John’s Gospel. The previous article in this series appeared in May of this year.

The bearing of our Lord’s teaching changes somewhat in the second half of His discourse on the eve of the Passover. He now instructs the eleven, so that in the situation in which they would be left they may exhibit their true character as His disciples. Earlier He had spoken of the revelation of the Father in Himself, that great Fountain-head from which they were to be supplied and strengthened for those later experiences. But the principal theme here (in chapters 15 and 16) is the development of likeness to Christ amongst His own on earth, the display of His life and character within believers in a world which is *not* their home environment. Chapter 14 shows that our ultimate destiny is to be *with* Him where He *is*, though we can touch that home-atmosphere already; we have access to the Father through Him. But we are still in the world, though not of it. We need to be told about *being* Christian, and showing the fruits of Christianity, here. The expressions “herein is my Father glorified” and “so shall ye be my disciples” need to be realised in us. Effects can appear in our lives which follow the pattern of our Lord Himself, and bring honour to the Father. Indeed, His Father looks for these effects, fosters them, and finds pleasure in them. Witnessing to our Lord, and the strength for it, also find their place in these chapters. The Lord Jesus forewarns, too, that opposition from the world must be expected; but the key to weathering it is given. *He* overcame the world, and provides the model for us too.

From this brief indication of the context in which the statement, “I am the true Vine”, appears, we now pass to the aptness of the figure of the Vine, as used by our Lord, and the way in which it links with the Old Testament passages based on the same figure. Later, we shall focus on the idea of fruit-bearing which is such a central part

of this metaphor of the Vine. Then, at the close, the need for our own obedience to our Lord's instruction on this matter must be faced.

The Vine

Following the pattern of the earlier descriptions of Himself as "the *true bread*", and "the *true light*", our Lord uses the term "the *true Vine*" here. As we may expect, there is a contrast with an earlier picture of a similar kind, found in several passages in the Old Testament. The nation of Israel, throughout the O.T., proved to be God's failing and unfruitful Vine. His favour in establishing His earthly people, His high expectations from them, His lament over their fruitlessness, appear in various places (notably in Psalm 80:8-17, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21; 12:10, Ezekiel 15:2-8; 19:10-14, Hosea 10:1). Israel's faithlessness is the chief point in most of these passages. She was a strange Vine, a degenerate plant, unproductive of the expected fruit, unresponsive to her Owner. In referring to Himself as the *true Vine*, the Lord Jesus replaces Israel, where such fruitlessness had been evident, by Himself. He Himself is the true and only stock acceptable to God; He is the one Source of fruitfulness agreeable to the Father.

A vine at the optimum stage of fruit-production, laden with fruit, is of course something attractive to observe. To partake of the fruit of a high-quality vine is a still more satisfying experience. Vine-cultivation has as its objective the production of *fruit*: and the fruit must be acceptable to the *taste*, which is one of the most highly-discerning of our senses. The produce of the vine is sweet to the taste, and gladdening to the heart of man, as Scripture itself confirms. Apart from this, there would be no point in growing vines. Ezekiel 15, mentioned above, says this. The wood of the vine is of no use; one cannot make from it even a peg, to hang a vessel on. The sole value of a vine is in its fruit.

Still thinking about the vine in nature, as the picture which the Lord uses here, careful culture of vines is particularly necessary if a prolific crop of choice fruit is to be fostered. The vine-tender must be alert and active, concerned about the productivity of his vine, aiming always for good fruit, pure and distinctive in quality. The fruit must meet his own high standards first, though others will appreciate it too. The sad story of the Old Testament is that, *despite* thorough care and attention, *despite* all the favours from God, Israel was still God's unfruitful Vine. But all is changed when we consider "the *true Vine*". Let us move now from the illustration to the reality.

Fruit

In a way characteristic of this Gospel, immediate reference to the Father follows the statement "I am the true Vine". Father and Son are frequently seen together, working towards the same end, *never* moving along separate lines. The disciples are the "third party" in this teaching: though clearly as "the branches" they must be thought of as part of the Vine, fulfilling their own part in this process; and they are nothing if severed from Him. The husbandman, the vine, the branches,

all co-operating, with fruit as the objective: here is the gist of the picture. In pre-Christian days, attachment to *Israel*, though a privilege, was of an outward kind; the link with God was often formal and hollow. God, though patient over long years, found no satisfaction there. But now, by contrast, attachment to *Christ* (of the proper kind) is inward and living in nature. Christ being the Person that He is, being such a Fount of energy and life after His own kind, there is certainly the possibility of fruit in abundance. But disciples need to be subject to discipline, and obedient to instruction, on the way to such fruitfulness.

The nature of the "fruit" envisaged becomes clear if we ask what it is that the Father wishes to see in us, what will please Him, what in us will bring glory to the Father. The answer in a word is Christlikeness. If the Vine is Christ, then the fruit it bears must be of the life and character of Christ. While there are Scriptures which speak forthrightly about what cannot please God, others show equally clearly where the Father finds His satisfaction. Of the former kind: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" is as clear a passage as any (Romans 8:8). The whole O.T. period of probation proved that Israel after the flesh could produce no acceptable fruit for God. The passage we are considering underlines this too. "Without me ye can do nothing", is our Lord's word about self-generated and self-reliant attempts at fruitfulness. On the other hand, how frequently Scripture speaks of the pleasure that the Father finds in Christ. In Him, the Son, the Father is eternally well-pleased; there is something entirely special in *that* unique bond. But on earth, in incarnation, everything about Him in holy Manhood commanded the fullest approval according to the highest criteria of all — His words and His works, His devotion and faithfulness, the gracious quality of His demeanour in every situation, the "manner of man" that He was, meeting every test so perfectly. We surely have no difficulty at all in thinking of *Him* as the great producer of all that pleases God. Yet the thought that the high quality of that character of life could appear in ourselves is both amazing and humbling; but it is the aim of this teaching. The living link with Christ, the Source as well as the Model of fruitfulness, is the secret of it. That link entails a close drawing upon our Lord, a living interweaving of our life with His, in practical and obedient communion with Him.

A verse which helps in suggesting the meaning of the fruit which can appear amongst Christians is Galatians 5:22. In total contrast with the works of the flesh, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance": surely these, as a whole, describe that inward quality of character and of spirit shown in perfection by our Lord. Good works, and success in the gospel, are perhaps not the first thing in mind in this teaching about fruit-bearing. The primary objective is a demonstration in us of the life of Christ Himself, though other consequences may flow from that. The verse quoted describes this as the fruit of *the Spirit*. The Spirit of God, indwelling believers, occupying them with Christ, aims to produce this character in us. The Father Himself is also active, carefully handling the living branches to increase their fruitfulness. Purging (or cleansing), aiming for increased fruit, removing over-active

growth of an undesirable kind, is a graphic picture of the Father's desire to foster maturity in the graces of Christ. It speaks of a loving and well-intentioned discipline which we must often accept, if the right kind of growth, growth into Christ, is to proceed. The disciples receiving this teaching were clean already through His word spoken to them earlier. There was a reality about them, as those drawn to Him, and searched and inwardly affected by His word. Their faith in Him was real, and soon His all-cleansing blood would be shed for them. But real disciples need to be growing, and gaining in likeness to the Lord Jesus, under the discipline which shapes and purifies them to that end. There is a requirement on the part of the disciple, too, which the next section will notice. But, as a final point here, the case of fruitless branches is also mentioned as a warning. It is possible to be superficially close to Christ without a *vital* link with Him. Judas Iscariot was active in treachery at the very time these words were being said to the true disciples. He is the prime example of a lifeless branch, seeming so close to the Source of life and fruitfulness. How many mere professors of Christ have succeeded him, though in a less notorious way. What a solemn truth it is that fruit in our lives is, in a sense, the test of our reality: or, to phrase it differently, faith in Christ *continues* (and makes itself evident) after it first relies on Him. Life is received by a believer; and that life is not static, but *abides* in Christ in a vital and increasing way.

Abiding

The frequency of the word "abide" in this passage stands out prominently; especially when it is noticed that "continue" (v. 9) and "remain" (v. 16) are other instances of the same word. John uses the word often, and in the Gospel it is most prominent of all in this place. This "abiding" is the critical matter in the chapter, and its importance cannot be over-stressed. Our Lord's manner is encouraging and kindly towards His disciples, treating them as genuine in their faith, and devoted to Him, as indeed they were. Friends, He calls them later in the chapter. Nevertheless His words are straightforward. "Abide in me and I in you", "Continue ye in my love". In the opening ten verses, these are the verbs in the imperative mood, the mood of command. He presses this on His disciples in a gracious way. The other verses extend and amplify what it means to abide in Him, while making the alternative clear too.

In verses 4ff. the Vine illustration is at the centre of the explanation of what "abiding" involves. A branch is not an entity on its own; it is part of a tree. It has no life or growth in itself; only intimate and vital attachment to the stem makes it part of the whole tree. Thus the sap flows in it, and the life of the tree shows itself in the branch. There could be no better picture of dependence than a branch. That close, organic, and constant link with the mainstream of its life is all-important to it; it is the key to its own vitality and fruitfulness. *Abiding* is constant intimate life with our Lord, drawing from Him by being in the closest of touch with Him. The word "abiding" includes the thought of "dwelling" (and is sometimes translated that way in the

A.V.); what a thought it is that He, our Lord, can be our dwelling-place, the home of our souls, in our daily living! This word, "Abide in me", urges us to sustain this bond with Him, consciously and dependently. He too will be *in us*, as life and character, enabling us to produce fruit, as we observe this word of His.

"Continue ye in my love." This, a small variant on the same instruction, picks out the essence of the matter. *His* love is the first and central thing about Him. All His other qualities, such as those detailed in Galatians 5:22, are ways in which His love manifests itself. In a very real sense the one word *love* covers all the character of our Lord. But how excellent, and how exceptional, is *His* love! Abiding there, we shall be at home with Him, appreciating His love and responding to it, and carrying some reflection of it in our daily attitudes. It is a love which, as we live in it, will live in us: and, not least, it will be mutually demonstrated amongst His disciples. The next great direct word from the Lord in the chapter (verse 12) insists on this; and *obedience* to His word is the sign of true responsive love to Him on our part. We shall know something of *His joy* too, if we act on these desires of His in responsive obedience (see verse 11).

While not attempting to cover the whole passage, we may reflect finally on the importance of having *His words* "abiding" in us, as indicated in verse 7. Abiding in Him, He Himself will abide in us; but, more than that, His very words will be recalled and treasured, and held close to the heart of our living. They will provide the guiding principles of our thinking, shaping our discernment of things and moving us after the objectives which suit Him. To quote from a different context we do well to "let His sayings sink down in our ears", and find a place in our hearts, at the core of our being. Thus His mind about things will be reflected in our judgments too; our desires will be in line with His will, and our prayers will be confident and expectant, the product of close fellowship with Him.

Though the disciple's path in a world where His Lord is absent, and rejected, has its rough experiences, what compensations he can find in his Lord! What a Source of true life and vigour, what supplies and what energy for fruitfulness, what direction and strength for the worthwhile life, until He comes, are to be found in the Lord Jesus! Let us, in our own experience, prove our Lord in these ways. Without Him we have nothing, and can do nothing; but with Him, as Paul put it, "all things" can be done "through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE ————— NORMAN GRIFFITHS

4. ITS PRACTICAL EFFECT: PURIFYING AND ANCHORING

Previous articles in this short series have defined the Christian's Hope and considered the objective which it opens before us. Its character, as a living and a blessed Hope was worked out from Scripture, and in this concluding article the definite statements of Scripture about its effect on our present, daily lives are opened up.

The "Christian's hope" should have a practical effect on the life he lives. This effect will be considered from two passages of Scripture. Firstly, its purifying effect will be considered, as found in 1 John 3:1-3. Secondly, its assuring effect as an "anchor of the soul" will be shown, from Hebrews 6:9-20.

In the former passage, the Christian's hope is said to be "in Him" — in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, and in His appearing or manifestation. Its effect is to cause the one who has such a hope to "purify himself even as He is pure". This is practical sanctification. The hope of being like Him then when He appears has the effect of causing a Christian to desire to be more like Him now.

Behold what manner of love is this that the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God! The Authorised Version has "sons" where it should read "children" — the word in the original is TEKNA. We are sons by adoption (Ephesians 1:5, where the A.V., strangely, translates "children" — and Galatians 4:5) but "children" by new birth. The term "sonship" sets forth the position and dignity to be manifested in glory (Romans 8:19). This is Pauline doctrine. John however writes of the family of God, composed of "children" who are born of God, and who are objects of the Father's love. What amazing love this is!

It was a great delight to discover that in the original, the word translated "what manner of", is POTAPOC, and has as its primary meaning, "of what country". It is like our expression, when something unusual and extraordinary is said to be "out of this world". Who can adequately describe the Father's love, which has been revealed in the Son, who dwells in His bosom and which has been bestowed upon the children?

Again and again in this epistle John so completely identifies God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son, that we cannot distinguish whether the One or the Other is the subject. So it is in this passage; he speaks of the Father's love bestowed upon the children of God, and immediately afterwards speaks of His "appearing" — obviously referring to Christ (compare 2:24, 28).

Having this hope in Him ought to produce the desire for purification; it ought to have a sanctifying effect on all our actions, thoughts and words. What we do, where we go, what we think, what we say, what we look at and read — should all be controlled by this hope in Him.

Of all the different thoughts connected with the Christian's hope, He is the centre. Our hope is in Him. Indeed, in the introduction to his first epistle to Timothy, Paul speaks of the "Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope", and our hope in *Him* is a purifying hope.

Let us now turn to Hebrews 6:11-20, our second and final Scripture, where the Christian's hope is presented as an anchor of the soul.

The epistle to the Hebrews, as its title indicates, was written to Jewish Christians who were in danger of going back to the old system. Relationships with God in that system were set forth in an earthly system of ordinances and rituals, appealing to sight and sense. God dwelt in thick darkness and the way into His presence was not yet made manifest. The epistle was written to establish those believers in the privilege and enjoyment of a new heavenly relationship, even though they were still on earth. This new relationship was made available by the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, their rejected Messiah, now seated in heaven at the right hand of the majesty on high — a point insisted on in, and central to, this epistle (Hebrews 1:3, 1:13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2).

Again and again the contrastive conjunction *but* is used between the old and the new; seven times we read of *coming to God* — of approach to Him in the sanctuary; and thirteen times the new order of things is described by the characteristic word *better*. In Hebrews 7:19 we read that the law — the old system — "made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God". The Christian's hope is a *better hope*.

In Hebrews 6:1-8 the writer spoke of those who fall away. But he saw (v. 9) evidences of better things in the beloved to whom he wrote, namely, their faith, love, and hope — the three characteristics often brought together (1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:3). In v. 11 his desire is seen to be that these Hebrew Christians should show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, following those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Their hope was firmly based on two immutable, that is, unalterable, things. These were the promise, and the oath, of the God who cannot lie. This reminds us again of Titus 1:2 where the same thought is to be found.

If such a thought is laid hold of, it is an anchor of the soul — safe and firm — and fixed in the glory which is within the veil. Our hope is firmly secured in the sanctuary, in God's immediate presence "whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus", at the right hand of God.

Christ has gone in as our Forerunner. We are after-runners in the race, who "look away" unto Jesus, the leader and finisher of the path of faith. Having completed it, and being set down at the right hand of the throne of God (12:2), He is there in the wonderful character of "an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (6:20). He may at present exercise a priesthood after the pattern of Aaron (as merciful and faithful, able to succour and sympathise), but as an order

of priesthood, "made after the law of carnal commandment" (7:16), the Aaronic priesthood is set aside. Christ, priest after the order of Melchisedec, that is, priest "after the power of an endless life", will come forth in that character, as king and priest, to reign and bless. He will be "King of righteousness" and "King of peace" (7:2). He has been made such a priest by an immutable oath. "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4, quoted in Hebrews 5:6, 7:17, 21).

Thus, by the oath to the heirs of the promise (Hebrews 6:14-18), and by the oath to Christ our great high priest, we have an unchangeable hope, based on the very character of God, as an anchor for our souls, safe and firm. In Hebrews 10:23 we are exhorted to hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering (New Trans. of J.N.D.; the N.I.V. has it, "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess") "*for he is faithful that promised*".

The Christian's hope is in our Lord Jesus Christ, and will be realised when we are caught up to be with Him for ever. It has as its objective *heaven and glory*; its character is *living and blessed*; and in its practical effect it is *purifying and anchoring*.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17).

THE WORLD

T. TYSON

4. OVERCOMING THE WORLD

In this article two senses in which the believer overcomes the world are considered — positional and practical. The first, studied in John 16:20, 33 and John 17, depends on Christ who has overcome the world. The second concerns our response to Christ's overcoming, and is studied from the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

We concluded the previous paper with the verse, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever". We begin this paper with the thought that overcoming the world means, not being overcome by the world. In Hebrews 11 we find a list of overcomers. Some of them might seem, in fact, to have been overcome by the world. This is not really so however, for in spite of all they went on to the end. *These all died in faith; they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth* (v. 13) and of them *the world was not worthy* (v. 38).

We will look at this subject in two aspects — positional and practical. We will find the first in John 16 and 17, and the second in

Revelation. There can be no precise line of demarcation between the two, for they are closely interrelated.

Positional

By this we mean that we overcome because we have been united with the Overcomer. As a result of Christ's departure out of this world "the world will rejoice" (John 16:20). Outwardly, it looked as though the world was the winner. Verse 33 however rings a note of triumph. "Be of good cheer [i.e. you can rejoice]; I have overcome the world."

In this sense, every true believer is an overcomer, for he is *in Christ*.

In John 17 we are introduced into the wonderful realm of eternal, divine relationships. We read of the glory which Christ had with the Father before the world was (v. 5), taking us into eternity past; and we read of the day when His own, with Him where He is, shall behold His glory, which the Father has given Him (v. 24), taking us into eternity future, yet linked with eternity past — "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. What wonders for our souls to meditate upon!

Against this background we must view the place of the disciples, and of ourselves, in relation to the world:

- "The men whom thou gavest me out of the world" (v. 6).
- "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me" (v. 9).
- "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (v. 14).
- "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (v. 16).

These verses establish our place in Christ — taken out of the world and given to Him by the Father. Could there be any failure or breakdown there? "In a love which cannot cease I am His, and He is mine".

The disciples, and we, are still in the world, yet the same positional truth holds. "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (v. 11). Will the Father answer that prayer? Of course He will! Is He able? We need not ask. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (v. 15).

Again, in v. 18 we read, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth". Will the Lord fail in this? Surely never. He will fully accomplish His purposes in us. We shall never perish. We shall be overcomers. "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). The world is not going to have the last word in the history of the believer. Christ will have it, at the rapture.

These wonderful things being true of us *positionally*, there ought to be day by day evidence of it *practically*. "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end" (Hebrews 6:11).

Practical

There is an exhortation, connected with "overcoming" in each of the letters to the seven churches. Let us see what we can learn from them.

Ephesus. Overcoming in this church was by greater love for the Lord (Revelation 2:1-7). The Lord's rebuke to them was, that they had "left their first love" (v. 4). Christ no longer held the supreme place in their affections that once He had. The question to each of us is, "What does the Lord mean to me now, at this moment?" Paul longed, "that [he] might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). And his prayer for the Ephesians had been, "that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17).

For one who thus overcame, the reward was "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). He will be brought to enjoy all that God had purposed for man's blessing from the very first. The first pair made the centre of their attention, not the tree of life which God had placed in the midst of the garden (Genesis 2:9), but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan's insinuations were preferred to God's thoughts. Whose word holds the centre in our thoughts? Between the tree of life forfeited in Genesis, and the tree of life gained in Revelation stands another tree — that on Calvary — in the midst.

Smyrna. Those who overcame in this church did so by enduring trial and death (Revelation 2:8-11). To them the reward would be, they "shall not be hurt of the second death".

The following poem, adapted from the French, captures the spirit of this overcoming. It was written by one missionary in China, upon news of the persecution of a fellow missionary.

*Fear of what? To feel my spirit's blest release,
To gain possession of eternal peace
Sweet promised rest in heavenly realms of bliss,
Fear of this?*

*Fear of what? To see Thee, Saviour, face to face,
To view the brilliant sunshine of Thy grace,
To see thy wounded side. What never ending bliss!
Fear of this?*

*Fear of what? Perchance to feel a mortal blow,
My body pierced as was my Master's here below
On that dread day when darkness veiled heaven's face.
Fear of this?*

*Fear of what? Watering with blood a sterile soil,
And by my death more than through life of toil
Changing to hearts of flesh, stones of such hardness.
Fear of this?*

Pergamos. These overcomers do so by keeping separate from evil doctrine and practice (Revelations 2:12-17). Their reward is to eat of the "hidden manna". Where they had been living would be a spiritual desert. And they would receive "a white stone" — symbol of enduring

purity, and a sign of the Master's "well done" to the one who has maintained truth in a scene of error. "Little deeds we had forgotten, He will tell us were for Him". On the stone would be "a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it". This is the mark of personal known relationship and recognition.

Thyatira. Overcoming in this case was achieved by overcoming "till I come" — in a dark time of superstition and idolatry (Revelation 2:18-29). The Lord knows all — works, love, service, faith, patience, and the last works to be more than the first. Amid all the working of Satan there were those who were faithfully working in the truth. To them the Lord's command was to hold fast what they had till He come. How relevant this exhortation today when all around we see the truth of God being rejected or neglected!

The reward in this case was "power over the nations" and to "rule them" as Christ had received of His Father (cp. Psalm 2:7-9). This was the very power that Rome sought and wielded (cp. Revelation 18:3ff.). Lastly, "And I will give him the morning star". How precious, when the light of the truth seemed almost obliterated, to have the living hope of a new day about to dawn — the hope of the Lord's return.

Sardis. Overcoming in this, the "church with a name that she lives, but is dead", is by "watching" (the very thing a dead man cannot do), and by "strengthening the things that remain" (Revelation 3:1-6). Even these things are spoken of as "ready to die"; it is all the more urgent to watch and to strengthen them, lest they be lost.

The overcomer in this church is promised a reward that reminds us of the fundamental blessings of salvation by faith in the precious blood of Christ. On what other ground can the white raiment be bestowed? The name of the overcomer is indelibly there in the book of life, and it is confessed before the Father and the angels. How important it is, in these dark days, to dwell much on the great, precious truths of the gospel of our salvation.

Philadelphia. The overcomers in this church are those who respond to the word, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown". They had kept His word, and not denied His name (Revelation 3:7-13), but there was no room for complacency, for there were those who would seek to divert them from the pathway of simple obedience and thereby rob them of their crown. The door of opportunity was still kept open by the Lord Himself. It was their, and remains our, responsibility to use it.

These believers were not recognised. They were despised. The reward for such overcomers was recognition from the Lord Himself. They would be a permanent testimony to the grace and wisdom of God — "a pillar in the temple of my God". This would be their *place*. The name of "my God" would be written upon them, thus establishing their *owner* and hence their security. Now the believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, as the earnest of his inheritance; then he will see the fulfillment of all God's purposes, and God's own name will be written on him. "The name of the city of my God" will also be written on him — indicating his *home*. This seen here, not as the Father's

house, but as the believer's dwelling place in the day of display — the city of God. And lastly, "my new name" — speaking of the overcomer's *Redeemer Companion* — the same blessed Saviour, known in all the preciousness of His love, no longer in humiliation, but in glory. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

Laodicea. To overcome in this church was to open the door to Him. This brings us back to the most fundamental step of all, to the very beginning without which there can be no overcoming, for we can only overcome *in* Him, and because He also overcame. This then characterises the reward: to "sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:14-22).

And thus we read at the end of Revelation, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. . . . He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving [those who are overcome] . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire" (Revelation 21:6-8).

May we ever be diligent to show by our practice what is true of us positionally in Christ — and live as overcomers.

SAMUEL'S CIRCUIT _____ JOHN BARNES

The stones of Bethel, of Gilgal and of Mizpeh, and the rocky height of Ramah, all have something to tell us about Samuel's service, as he judged Israel.

Though perhaps not the most spectacular, Samuel was one of the greatest of those who served God in Israel. He was above all a man of God. It seems that when he had become established as a prophet-judge he settled in Ramah and conducted his valuable ministry from that city. "He judged Israel all the days of his life." I imagine that we are not to think of the verb "judged" as indicating that he went about criticising the people, but rather that as he moved around he brought before Israel what was the mind of the Lord in relation to their lives; that he advised them, counselled them, and bore on his loving heart the waywardness and unfaithfulness of the nation. In chapter 12:23 we are given a glimpse of this aspect of his life. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to *pray* for you, but I will *teach* you the good and right way." His faithful ministry was conducted on those lines; intercession and instruction.

Samuel made an annual round of visiting ministry. No doubt he would hear complaints, listen to cases, settle quarrels, and give wise advice, but he was always bearing the load of the people before the Lord. The word "burden" is one which is used in the prophets. God has the burden of His people on His own heart, and a true prophet takes this up in measure. In assembly terms we see this exemplified in the apostle Paul who bore on his heart the care of all the churches. As Samuel followed his circuit of visits he did so in this spirit. There seems to be an order in the main places referred to; Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh

and Ramah, to which he always returned (1 Samuel 7:15-17). The first of these places was marked by one memorial stone, set up by Jacob when he slept there on his way towards Padan Aram. Gilgal had twelve memorial stones set up by Joshua after the dry-shod crossing of the Jordan on Israel's entrance into the land of promise. Near the third place, Mizpeh, stood the "stone of help" Ebenezer — "hitherto hath the Lord helped us" Ramah was probably a natural rocky height, a "lofty place", which the name is held to mean. So there is a progress from a monolith, to twelve stones, to another stone and, finally, to a rocky hill.

1. Bethel. Revelation.

On that first night of Jacob's long exile from his father's house, he slept in that lonely place and made a pillow of stones on which to rest his head while he slept. There God made Himself known to the wanderer. Very likely Jacob felt abandoned and afraid, but God revealed Himself to him there, and Jacob, in memory of that great fact, named the place, Bethel, the house of the mighty God. At a later date, after his return from exile, he built an altar there and named it El Bethel, which is a step further; the mighty God of the house of the mighty God. God, the God of his fathers and his own God undertook to protect him and to keep him in his travels; to bring him safely back and to confer on him the blessings of His covenant with Abraham and Isaac. This was an offer of sovereign grace, proposed by God Himself and unthought of by Jacob. He was not even aware that God was in that place. "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." But the Lord knew that Jacob was there and He had His eye upon him and undertook to care for him at all times.

As Samuel began his course of visits this was his first major halt. Maybe he stayed at Bethel several weeks and the people would come and listen to the word of the Lord and to have problems sorted out. In the atmosphere of the house of God the faithful servant of God would conduct his ministry with that in mind. It is perhaps instructive to remember that his own career began in the Lord's house in Shiloh during Eli's priesthood, and the first communications Samuel had from the Lord came to him in the cloistered quiet of the tabernacle there. The Lord spoke and Samuel heard. Wherever he went he would bring with him the atmosphere of the house of the mighty God, its light, its holiness and its truth.

2. Gilgal. Removal.

If the saints are to walk in the benefit of what is true of the house of God, that which belongs to the old man has to go. Gilgal is prominently linked with the truth of circumcision, and this truth is uncompromising. When Israel reached Gilgal after the wilderness journey was over, there was a brief halt. Many divine instructions had been seriously neglected during the desert years, and circumcision was one of them. So a halt was arranged at Gilgal and all the males who had not been circumcised were circumcised. Sharp knives were ordered to be made for this purpose. It is believed that the expression may

mean, “knives of flint”. Flint is an extremely hard material and is suggestive of a wholly uncompromising action. The flesh must go as wholly unsuitable for the land.

As Samuel made his visits to this place he would have this truth in his mind and recall that it was here the reproach of Egypt was rolled off the nation by circumcision. One incident brings out how decisively this mild, quiet man could act when occasion required. After Saul’s disobedience in the Amalek episode, the spared king of the Amalekites, Agag, sidled “delicately” up to the prophet with the honeyed words, “Surely the bitterness of death is past” (1 Samuel 15:32). But Samuel had no thought of sparing this monster whose sword had made widows and orphans in Israel, and we read that Samuel himself hewed him in pieces before the Lord. There is a ruthlessness about this which seems incongruous in the otherwise quiet tenor of Samuel’s way, but in truth it is wholly in keeping. Samuel had come from Bethel, the house of God, and God swore to have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Samuel’s time was to be no exception to this rule, and the man of God accepted this cutting off at Gilgal, a job Saul should have done but which he was not equipped to do, for he was, himself, a man of the flesh, and was willing to spare that which was obnoxious to God. I fear we tend often to be like that. There is a lot of concision about us; we are so ready to cut off some things, perhaps in others, but the whole cutting off which is the mark of true circumcision is what marked this man of God.

3. Mizpeh. Reminder.

Mizpeh (or, Mizpah) means, “a place for watching”. Laban and Jacob made a “Mizpah” “in the mount of Gilead” when they called the Lord to watch between them to see they kept the covenant they had made. “The God of Abraham and of Nahor . . . judge between us” (Genesis 31:25, 45-53). If this sense is present in that other Mizpeh where Samuel judged, then he was able to employ it. In old age he asked the people to review his judicial career: had he defrauded anybody, or ever taken bribes? No, they affirmed, never had he done so. Well, said Samuel, “The Lord is witness against you . . . that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness” (1 Samuel 12:2-5). May we not find a lesson in the fact that it was the man who had judged at Bethel and judged at Gilgal who could thus call the Lord to witness as to the manner of his judging?

But near Mizpeh there was another stone — erected by Samuel himself. *Ebenezer* was there — symbol of God’s help for His people against their enemies inspite of all their unfaithfulness (1 Samuel 7:12). “We fail, He faileth not”. The prophet Jeremiah, in his sad little book, the Lamentations, breaks out in relief in the midst of his sorrows over the people’s unfaithfulness, “Great is thy faithfulness”. Samuel would know his own failure and that of the people he judged. Ebenezer would encourage him, every time he approached Mizpeh.

4. Ramah. Response.

As the man of God returned to his little home, he reached the peak of

his circuit; the rocky peak. He had passed through the sites of one stone, twelve stones, another stone, and now reached the stony pinnacle of Ramah. He was not there, however, to relax, but to continue bearing in his heart the sins and sorrows of the people of God. Perhaps Ramah is suggestive of his response to all the truth of the year's round of visits; the revelation of God Himself, the removal of the man who had no place in God's system, the abiding faithfulness of God to the truth. At Ramah there seems to be a threefold answer to this in the life of Samuel.

His home was there. As he walked before the Lord in the quiet of his own home he did so with undeviating piety. At a later date, when the people desired a king, they pointed out to the prophet that his sons' behaviour did not measure up to his own. He was a man who was in communion with the Lord and whose entire life was devoted to His service. He did not withdraw into a monastery or into a cave in the hills, but lived in Ramah as a family man. "There was his house."

There he judged Israel. There was his pastoral life. Samuel had the heart of a shepherd. When Saul wandered from the Lord, Samuel never ceased to mourn; the heart of a true shepherd could never be content while the sheep are scattered. Samuel carried the load of these sorrows home with him to Ramah; "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." He ministered the word of the Lord to those who would hearken. No doubt his home was a centre of light and truth in the locality, and those who sought the Lord would gather to him for guidance. "There he judged Israel."

There he built an altar unto the Lord. There was his prayer life. Samuel was undeniably a man of prayer. He was continually in the presence of God seeking His face and learning His mind; presenting the cause of the people before Him. We see these three aspects in Paul's life. He was careful to maintain personal piety in order that the testimony should not suffer reproach through any fault of his. It was also his exercise to bring the saints into the knowledge of the truth, and we can see the breadth of his prayer interests as we read his letters. Individual saints and assemblies all over the known world had a place in the intercessory prayers of this great servant of Christ. For the supreme example, we must go, as always, to the Lord Jesus. His personal life was wholly free from defects of any kind, inward or outward. No one taught like He; none prayed like He. The four chapters of the "last words", John 13 to 16, followed by the great intercessory prayer of chapter 17 are unsurpassed examples of this truth.

CORRESPONDENCE

SCRIPTURE UNION NOTES AND OTHER MATTERS

We have received from Mr. Alan Smart the following reply to the "Critical Comment" by Dr. Binnie, published in the July issue (pp. 255-6).

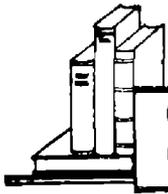
I was interested in the comments by Dr. Binnie in your July issue. Firstly, on S.U. readings. The main reason why brethren of today do not contribute to S.U. notes is not because of lack of ability, but because they feel that prepared notes in this form would limit an individual Bible reader's study of the Scriptures. Such study must be only as led by the Spirit of God. For a similar reason the early brethren would not provide verse by verse commentaries on the books of the Bible, W. Kelly being the main exception (though most of even his commentaries are in the nature of collections of addresses). Brethren have always sought to maintain that Christianity is a living principle. They have sought to avoid resurrecting the old Jewish legalism which erected a system of dead Talmudic interpretation of the Law. We are grateful for those servants whom God has raised up to expound His word, but the study of that word must be in living power.

As regards the comments on the U.C.C.F., I remember reading, in *The Times* about two years ago, an article by their Religious Affairs correspondent, who said that fundamentalists in universities were giving up their belief in the literal interpretation of Genesis.

The reference by Dr. Binnie to Paul's quoting from Greek poets in his sermon to the Athenians, though often used, is perhaps not as convincing as one might think. The last verses of Acts, chapter 17, seem to indicate that the preaching had less effect than elsewhere. We know that God is sovereign. However He chooses to work through human vessels, and it may have been that God withheld great blessing on that occasion as an example to us not to rely on human wisdom. It would seem that Paul learned this lesson. His next visit was to Corinth. When writing to these saints later he said, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom. . . . For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

I trust this may prove helpful to your readers.

ALAN SMART



Scripture Truth

(incorporating *Words of Help*)

NOVEMBER, 1982

NEHEMIAH

COLIN CURRY

What do the 'walls' mean? Is there still something to keep out? Is energy still required to build them? Does the enemy still attack these efforts? Dr. Curry offers a sensitive application of the main message of Nehemiah to our case and state. Conceived as a sequel to Gordon Kell's article on Ezra (July, 1981) it is worthy of, and will, we hope, receive, every reader's close attention.

The lessons we can draw from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are clearer once we understand their setting. We begin therefore by quoting from the opening of a recent outline of the book of Ezra*, and then extend that introduction to cover the book of Nehemiah also. This done, we proceed to some parts of the substance of the book in a little more detail.

Nehemiah's Times

“Ezra and Nehemiah have a special relevance today. Centuries before their time, great movements from God had taken place. God had worked mightily with His ancient people, setting them up in their land, and ultimately (in the days of David and Solomon) a great display of God, the God of Israel, had reached its peak. God was known and served amongst His people, with a testimony regarding Himself directed to the surrounding nations. But His people had moved away; they had departed seriously from Him, in heart and in conduct. It all crumbled and fell away. In time God's city was broken down, the temple destroyed, and His people captive in a strange land, the result of their disobedient and dishonouring ways. The nations that might have received their witness, instead became His means of rebuking them.

“Much the same situation exists today. Christianity had a wonderful beginning. God acted in Christ, and the Spirit of God moved in the early church. Those were days of real honour to God amongst the body of believers, real testimony to Him, real obedience to His will. In particular, obedience to His mind in assembly life, and the honouring of Christ in those areas of activity, marked those days. Broadly, amongst the people of God today, all this has been marred by disunity, disobedience, and inward and outward departure from ways pleasing to Him, as laid down in His Word. The book of Ezra tells

* Gordon Kell, in *Scripture Truth*, Vol. 47, p. 145.

how a fraction of the people of God were able to leave behind the bonds of their captivity, *depart* from the false situation (abnormal to them as the true people of God) and *return* to things as they had been at the beginning. What they accomplished was only a shadow of what had been apparent at the start. Nevertheless they were pleasing to God, and doing His will again. The book of Ezra therefore has much to tell us about doing His will today."

The same is true of the book of Nehemiah, which fits into the whole story in the following way. Ezra chapters 1-6 survey the return to Jerusalem that followed the decree of Cyrus the Persian (about B.C. 537). It recounts the progress of the rebuilding of the temple, despite setbacks and standstills, through to the completion of that building, all under the good hand of God (B.C. 516). Zerubbabel was the prime mover in this work, Joshua the high priest, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged both the faith and the effort of the people of God in those times. Well after this, Ezra journeyed to Jerusalem (in about 458); so that chapters 7ff are almost a lifetime after the first return of the Jewish remnant from captivity. Ezra's main activity sprang from his close touch with the Law (see Ezra 7:10). He brought it to light again, asserted its authority, exposed departures from its requirements, and encouraged and exemplified respect for its authority by practical obedience to it.

Ezra's part in this work of God for the recovery of His people overlaps with Nehemiah's, and he figures in Nehemiah's later chapters. Nehemiah arrived on the scene in Jerusalem later than Ezra (in 445), though his concern for the state of Jerusalem, and his urgent prayer (in chapter 1) had preceded his active involvement. The broken-down state of the city of Jerusalem was Nehemiah's great burden. Its desolate condition was of long standing, dating back to the pillage of the city, and its environs, when the captivity to Babylon began. But that ruin was sustained by the adversaries encircling Judah, watching the temple-building, impeding those who worked on it, making Jerusalem vulnerable and scarcely habitable, while the temple was under erection, and far beyond its completion too. Ezra 4:6-23, inserted in the account near the beginning of the work on the temple, looks ahead down the decades to survey the constant harassment (verbal, subtle, active and physical) to which the work of God was subjected, right through to Nehemiah's times. Some fresh news of recent exposure to hard pressures of this sort saddened Nehemiah anew when he heard of it (as described in his chapter 1), and brought him actively into the picture in the way related in chapter 2. His part in the work of restoration was concerned with re-establishing the *city* of Jerusalem, in particular in rebuilding its *walls*. Along with the protection afforded by the walls, Jerusalem as a walled city would have more stability as an entity for God (so that Judah was thus a small enclave among the heathen nations). More importantly, it was to be a distinct community, separate and free from dilution with the practices of those who encircled them, true to the God of their fathers, responsive to His presence amongst them, and obedient to His declared will for them. These were God's

intentions for them, and the objectives towards which these godly men moved, gaining the support of the faithful remnant of those days.

With the names of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, therefore, are linked the *temple*, the *law*, and the *walls*, each of which provided an important feature of the character of the life of the people of God in those faraway times. In our day, much that carries the 'Christian' name is unrecognisable as a version of New Testament Christianity; it has the stamp of Babylon upon it, and the need to return in faith, perhaps in a small and simple way, is a matter of obedience. It will involve leaving behind all that has the marks and the confusion of human ordering upon it. How important are these three key features in seeking to do God's will for us today! To recognise that God *dwells* amongst us, His favour towards us, and the high standards that become those amongst whom He dwells; the privilege of honouring and serving Him too, in response to His self-revelation in Christ, of carrying in our conduct some reflection of Himself apparent to those who observe us: surely commitment to such objectives is not optional. Secondly the remnant who returned took their guidance from a *book*. Their faithfulness showed itself in strong respect for the revealed will of God, and a desire to obey it at whatever cost to themselves. Still more today we have *written* guidance in the full and complete Word of God; with special teaching for the times of declension so well known to us. Wisdom and direction are there for us, and our course is to accept it and obey it without reservation.

But what is the lesson of the *walls* for today? Repairing the walls is the central activity related in Nehemiah. There is much about the deterrents to that work: but much too about the energy and the faith which went ahead in overcoming those obstacles, conscious of God's action with them. We shall need to see what watchfulness, indeed what effort on our part, is needed if our true Christian *distinctiveness* is to be preserved. The adversaries are such that this could easily be lost without trace. We can learn from Nehemiah the kind of alertness and dependence on God required, if the enemy's designs against us are to be frustrated. In a later section we shall look at Nehemiah himself. Nehemiah is such a character, in his own energetic and perceptive devotion to his God, that we must certainly think of him as a model of forthright and deep-seated godliness, for our help too who live in times not dissimilar to his.

Nehemiah's Walls

In Old Testament history, Israel was a people apart: they were separated (and rightly separated by God) from the Gentiles by a "middle wall of partition". It was for their safety, so as to preserve their purity and special witness to God as a people of His favour and choice; a people who carried His revelation of Himself at the time. Assimilation into the nations around them would have quickly submerged the special representation of Himself which rested on them. Two-way mixing between Israel and the heathen nations was never according to God's mind; but a welcome was always intended for "strangers" who were attracted towards Israel's God. Ruth the

Moabites, and the Queen of Sheba, are well-known examples.

The wall around Jerusalem, rebuilt in Nehemiah's days, was the physical counterpart of *that* kind of distinction, still right to maintain, between Judah and her idolatrous neighbours. It was right that she should retain her purity in the true knowledge of God. There is teaching still, in this wall-maintenance activity, for those favoured by God in the Christian day. But first let us note briefly that there are areas in which there are no barriers at all in this day when grace reigns. First, notice that in Christ the Jew and Gentile "wall of partition" no longer exists. National distinctions, and indeed all other disparities, no longer count amongst those who are "made nigh by the blood of Christ". Jew and Gentile are both subsumed (in marvellous grace) into that greater entity, the one body of Christ. Isolationism, and narrow drawing of boundaries, *within* the total body of believers, is in no sense properly Christian. Also, in the Christian era it is especially plain that grace has no boundaries limiting its outflow. God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Romans 3:29). Grace experienced can be spoken about, and offered, to any recipient.

But, these points noticed, the walls around Jerusalem still picture something quite critical if true believers are to be as God would have them be. There *is* a demarcation between the true Christian community and "the world". Believers are "in the world, but not of it". We shall be unwise if we are slack about our defences against incursions from outside of what is really foreign to us. There is need to retain our *separate* character. It involves guarding all that God in Christ has shown of Himself to us, and also resisting all influences (persons, teachings, attitudes and ways of life, tendencies within ourselves, and within our circles) which would rob us of our rich inheritance, and swamp our distinct character as those blessed in such a large way. The lines of attack, taken by the adversaries of Nehemiah and his people, were various: and part of his success in countering them was his wisdom in discerning and forestalling the enemy's wiles. He claims no credit for such wisdom, but his humble point-by-point reliance on his God surely is the key to its source. We can only extract from the story the main lines on which the enemy may defeat us. Awareness of these, along with a clear sight of our weaknesses, and willingness to build again where the gaps in our defences are so palpable, are the only lines on which to outface the enemy and honour God.

First we should note that conflict only arises when a move to obey God is taken. The Jews who had the most comfortable life in the post-exilic period were those who never bothered to return from exile. Far the majority of the dispersed people of God stayed on in the acceptable life to which they had settled. The opportunity to return to God's Centre, where His Name was paramount, was a test of their devotion to Him, which they failed. The names of those who honoured God are recorded in these books, but the others are passed by in His rolls of honour. Nehemiah had a responsible and acceptable position, being trusted by the Persian king; but he did not cling to it: he used it in God's interests, and exchanged it without hesitation for hard toil in support of the beleaguered city of God. Here is faith to follow!

Next let us make some comments on the history of the church, so that the apposite nature of this Old Testament instruction to our particular circumstances may be more evident. The church of Christ on earth has passed through long dark times, when Christian truth and character have been almost entirely lost to sight. There have also been times of recovery, and fresh emergence of Christian essentials. The Reformation was such a time. Truth long lost shone out again. Men lived and died for truth re-discovered in its liberating power.

Regrettably, the freshness and power of what springs to life in such revivals tends to be lost. Most of our readers live in the aftermath of highly significant movements of the Spirit of God in the nineteenth century, when men of God (searching their Bibles anew) were deeply exercised about the state of affairs in the general 'Christian' scene. They recognised the situation of "the last days", foreseen in Scripture, and they found the guidance given for that situation in Scripture also. Christianity, in the broad sense, had become a great Babel of voices and practices, incorporating church practices far removed from simple biblical principles. From this, disassociation was seen to be the honourable course, following the guidelines of Scripture which spell out the will of God for faith to obey. These men *obeyed* the teaching which spoke directly to them, as the very word from God to themselves, and we must be thankful indeed that we have inherited the guidance which their faith has given us. If, nominally at least, we have moved away from 'Babylon' and bondage to false norms, and are seeking to act in continuity with the New Testament pattern of assembly behaviour, we owe it to the guides that God has been pleased to give us. But let us face the fact that almost a century after the beginnings of the return from Babylon, those in the Old Testament who were in the place where God's Name was honoured, *because their predecessors made that move*, were in need of great help to be alive and true to what was supposedly true of them. Their resistance to what would cramp and kill their *reality* in that position had to be maintained. How this speaks to ourselves, amongst whom the tendency to move over to a different 'church' affiliation without regard for what pleases God, or (at the other extreme) the adoption of the sanctimonious tone of self-conscious correctness, can at times be noticeable!

But supposing we are in agreement, out of *humble* conviction, that the lines we have been guided to follow are Scriptural lines, supposing we are neither shallow nor irresponsible, nor yet high-minded about our 'better understanding' of Christian trends and the conduct pleasing to God today, what else do we need to be guarded against? The tactics of the opposers of the work of God in Nehemiah's day can provide some answers to that question.

Ridicule is the easiest of weapons to mount against those who seriously seek to do God's will. The zeal for the rebuilding work, and the unity instilled in the workforce by Nehemiah's faith and initiative, meant that their morale was scarcely affected (chapter 4:1-6). Let us remember what an empty thing ridicule is, and let us act as before God, and be unaffected by men's judgements about us. Let us not,

as some do, share in any defamatory spirit about those who really seek to obey the Lord, though we may be nominally amongst them. Secondly, head-on *attack* was threatened at least, but dependent prayer and the sense of the great God who was with them provided courage to meet the threat. Their own weapons had to be "at the ready" while the constructive work must also proceed without let-up. Defence of a loyal stand for God, using the "sword of the Spirit", needs watchfulness and readiness for action by every worker for God. God brings the counsels of the opposition to nought when His people are truly alert and active for Him (see the rest of chapter 4). Thirdly *internal dissension* arising as some worked things to their own advantage and to the impoverishment of others, was an evil Nehemiah had to rebuke, which might well have vitiated the whole character of the stand for God, its energy and unity. Nehemiah's own self-denying example meant that the wrongness of this spirit was quickly accepted and confessed (chapter 5). But what an incipient danger it is!

Compromise is a course of action suggested to the people of God by those that would destroy their true character. The 'mischief' underlying this was well detected by Nehemiah (6:1-4). Time spent in discussion on concessions to the enemy is time wasted, and Nehemiah's reply is a famous one. The positive work for God must go on. *Misrepresentation* is a type of propaganda lined up against faithful people of God (6:5-9). The things alleged are usually imaginary, and truth is the best defence here. But let us not give any handle for right criticism against us. Chapter 6 also describes a trap set for Nehemiah (10ff), by feigning interest in his safety, and suggesting a private meeting in the security of the temple. Nehemiah had no right of entry to the temple; so, for his own well-being, he was being persuaded to disobedience to the law. What ammunition this would have provided against him! How discerning we need to be, since we are easily lured into false moves. Which comes first, sparing of ourselves or obedience to Scripture?

On reflection, how closely this last question identifies the heart of the matter, as far as we are concerned. Meeting the enemy, in his frontal attacks, or in his subtle ways, depends greatly on where our loyalties really are. If worldly norms are habitual with us, if self-protection, self-comfort, and pursuit of the objectives that please ourselves (even on the question of "where we worship", or, the extent of our attendance and support) are uppermost in our minds, we shall soon be defeated. But if God and His Christ are central in our vision, His measureless grace to us, and the rich display of the excellent glory attached to His Name — if these things dominate our hearts, they will command our allegiance. We shall wish only to act so that He, our Lord, is honoured by our actions. We shall *use* the guidance of Scripture, and be far from inert in what pleases *God*.

Of course these statements are easily made, and readers will easily agree. Let us allow ourselves to be searched by them. An extract from a book which certainly searched the writer is as follows: "We Christians are too often like sponges soaked to capacity with the value-system of the society we live in". The over-valuing of material

prosperity is almost a part of our make-up; it can carry on along with the pretence of 'unworldliness', so the author of the book went on to say. These things are true; and it hurts to have them pointed out so plainly. It would be honesty to be humbled by such a comment, rather than merely assent to its broad truth. The enemy gets the victory over the worldly Christian with some ease; but let us each see ourselves, not others, as close to defeat on this score. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). Nehemiah, and the faithful with him, took that line; resisting the invasion of foreign influences, which would have stamped a totally different pattern upon their life in Jerusalem, swamping its God-honouring character. The later chapters tell of the acceptability of having worked out the will of God in this situation, joy and celebration being part of the outcome.

Nehemiah the man

No reference to the book of Nehemiah which omits the qualities of the man of God who mostly writes in the first person in it, would be fair to the book. A formidable, practical man, who does not obtrude because of strength of human personality, but rather because of close concern for God's concerns, always on the move when, in closeness to God, and genuine dependence, he sees clearly what action is right, a real worker for God, stimulating faith and effort in others too; such a man stands out from these pages as we read them. Here is unself-conscious godliness (the only true godliness), thinking, living, and acting as before God, with no thought of attributing anything to himself. Always "the hand of our God" over the developments was the reason for their successful outcome; survival through all those running battles with the adversaries was not at all a matter (in Nehemiah's thoughts) of *his* wits against theirs, but of God's help given, and utterly relied on in faith. *Thus* work is done, and battles are won, for the Lord.

Nehemiah at prayer, on his own, is seen repeatedly in the story. Deeply-felt distress at the plight of Jerusalem (and his fellow-Israelites) drew from him the prayer of chapter 1. This serious petition was not short-lived; he showed a constant shamefacedness at the state of God's people, confessing that he and they had only God's mercy to appeal to. Yet he was aware that history and Scripture told of God's sovereign actions, quite undeserved, in His steadfast favour towards them in the past. Here is the basis of his prayer: his hope and his faith are founded on God Himself. Such a spirit in prayer seems rightly first in the book; it is a necessary priority if effective activity for God is to be done. Having prayed long, Nehemiah begins to see what he must do; he looks for help to approach "this man", and to do it "today" (1:11). Soon that help is being given, and the action begins. Even in the conversation with the king, between the question put by the king and Nehemiah's answer, Nehemiah flashes a momentary prayer to "the God of heaven" (2:4). At that critical moment, God's aid is vital to him.

So it seems throughout the book: again and again, as critical points in the action come along, Nehemiah relives the situation as he relates it, interjecting something in the nature of an 'aside' to his God (a prayer short in style), so closely and constantly is he in touch with Him. The great confessional prayer of chapter 9, voiced by the Levites for the whole separated congregation, showed very much the humble and self-deprecating spirit, and yet the sense of God's great ability to renew them — the spirit present with Nehemiah from the start. Not only protected physically (by the walls), but also nourished inwardly and fortified spiritually by the contents of "the book of the law" spelt out clearly to them by Ezra (chapter 8), the people were, at least temporarily, in a right spirit before God. Nehemiah's manner before God had certainly contributed to this.

If it is held that deep spirituality has little to do with careful thought and close attention to practicalities, Nehemiah surely gives the lie to that idea. His faith is closely allied to good sense and good management; indeed these last qualities are an aspect of his faith. Though God-given, his wisdom was true down-to-earth wisdom (but not worldly wisdom). Rebuilding the wall in fifty-two days, with such distractions, was nothing less than a highly efficient operation. Nehemiah could see the hand of God in the edicts of emperors; but he also saw hard work (under considerable strain), as needing to be done (and needing to be done *properly*) as part of the ongoing work of God. In this way faith goes into action, not haphazardly nor fitfully, but thoroughly, and the credit is rightly given to God alone. What everyone saw, including the opposition, when the wall was finished, was that "this work was wrought of *our God*" (6:16).

The final chapter has important lessons to mention briefly. Nehemiah, away for a time at the imperial court, came back to find disturbing trends. God's standards were being lowered again amongst His people. Tobiah, an old enemy, is now settled in an apartment in the Temple, well-placed to exert his influence and intrigues. The frankincense, the meal-offerings, and the tithes, have been displaced by his "household stuff". Then also, sabbath-breaking and sabbath trade is a rapidly gathering practice. Nehemiah has not changed; he acts promptly, in righteous zeal, yet also in grief. He acts rather as the Master did later, finding His Father's house made into a den of thieves. So Nehemiah stemmed the tide, though only temporarily. Intermarrying with heathen neighbours, always a problem, was again on the increase. The law was consulted again, and the prohibition seen there, and some return to obedience ensued. How dangerous are cross-linkages with "the world"; how incompatible is Christ with Belial! How sad, but realistic, to find this last chapter of Old Testament history (for it *is* this) saying how easy it is to decline, even after faithfulness in the past. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, and the voice of God in these very times, speaks the same message. Vigilance (and perhaps we should add vigour), as epitomised by Nehemiah, in his dependence on God, is the only way to overcome.

There is much more to Nehemiah, especially to chapters 7-12, than we

have had room for. Readers will find help on the gates of Jerusalem in articles in past volumes of *Scripture Truth* (43:141, and 45:75, 84, and 104).

BACKSLIDING

ALLAN RETALLICK

How often promising Christians fall away after a time, not because of gross sin, but because they have not paid attention to the "little foxes" that "spoil the vines"!

It is interesting that the actual word, "backsliding", is not used in the New Testament, although the thought is clearly expressed in the words of the Lord Jesus to the would-be disciple in Luke 9:62: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God". To the Galatians the apostle writes: "Ye did run well: who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). It was a sad experience to hear someone telling of a conversation many years ago, and concluding with the words: "Of course, we were keen then".

Moses warned Israel at the very beginning of their national history, just before they entered the promised land, of the dire consequences of falling away. The later history of this nation is full of solemn warnings to us, for whom "all these things" were "written for our admonition". Again and again the nation had to be warned by the prophets not to reject the words of the living God, and yet, as Jeremiah had to remind them, they had changed their glory for that which did not profit (Jeremiah 2:11).

Seeking to be like the nations round about them, they asked for a king, and when Samuel brought the matter before the Lord, he was told: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). This king was hardly on the throne, when God had to say to Samuel: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments" (1 Samuel 15:11). Psalm 78 rehearses the sad history of this favoured people, and in verse 41 we are told: "They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel". Verse 57, too, uses a similar description of their backsliding: "But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow". They turned back and turned aside! Is this not the history of many that once "did run well"?

Jeremiah continued his message to Judah, after reminding them of their two-fold unfaithfulness in rejecting their God, "the fountain of living waters, and hewing themselves broken cisterns [i.e. idols] that could not hold water" (Jeremiah 2:13). He points out, in verse 19, the inevitable result of their backsliding: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts."

In the parable of the sower the Lord Jesus spoke of two kinds of ground where there seemed to be some measure of growth and fruitfulness, but where no real harvest was reaped. There were those that had no depth, and, although they received the word with joy, there was no root, and persecution and tribulation caused them to go back into the world. It may be that shallow profession is the result of shallow preaching, but not always. The hearer of the word is also responsible to believe, as the Lord told His hearers, with "an honest and good heart", and to "follow on to know the Lord". With so many it is merely an assent to the facts of the gospel, a mental conviction of the reasonableness of Christianity, and no more. It is not "mixed with faith" in these hearers (Hebrews 4:2), and they backslide because they were never really believers at all. Of the true believer it can be said: "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39).

The other kind of ground was that where the thorns sprang up and choked the young growth. This is probably the kind of response most familiar to us. These hear the word, but cares, riches and pleasures, and "other things" coming in, choke the word, and again no fruit remains. These "other things" may be one's business or family, hobbies, friends, all things that come between the soul and the Lord. They may not be wrong things necessarily in themselves, and yet how often promising Christians fall away after a time, not because of gross sin, but because they have not paid attention to the "little foxes" that spoil the vines! It may even be so-called "service" that becomes so important to us that we no longer have our eyes on the Lord. We know how Jeremiah had to warn the people of Judah in his day not to boast of "the temple of the Lord". Because they had not hearkened to the voice of the Lord, that sacred place would become as waste as Shiloh had already become. Older Christians may sometimes remind us that they have not missed a meeting for so many years, and yet, so deceitful is the human heart, even that may become a snare to cause them to become cold and formal. We all need to examine our own hearts to see if we are not allowing "other things" to blind our eyes to His beauty and glory.

We might expect that those that actually companied with the Lord during his years of ministry would be proof against such a falling away, but we know that this was not so. In the gospel of John we read of those that went back, and walked no more with Him (John 6:66). With what feeling the Lord must have turned to His little group of apostles: "Will ye also go away?". Peter's ready answer must have cheered Him, and yet even that little band contained a traitor, as He was quick to remind them, and Peter himself, not long afterwards, would deny that he even knew Jesus of Nazareth. We have often been reminded of the cause of Peter's lapse — sleeping when he should have watched and prayed, trusting in his own strength and faithfulness, warming his hands at the enemy's fire — all sufficient warnings in themselves to each and every one of us. Yet Peter was restored; Judas Iscariot, we read, went to his own place. Of the disciples that "went back and walked no more with Him" we read no more. Happily, "the

Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19), and all that are true disciples will have their portion with their Lord, since none can pluck them out of His hand, but oh, the wasted years, which might have been to His praise and glory!

The prophet Hosea mentions backsliding. He tells us that Israel slid back like a back-sliding heifer. If we have seen a young cow trying to get back up the bank after straying out of the field, we can see the aptness of this simile. The poor animal, in spite of its efforts, slides deeper and deeper into the mud, and only the farmer and his hands can get her back again where she belongs. In Hosea 11:7 the Lord says: "My people are bent to backsliding from me". In spite of His many warnings, they went their own way, following the abominations of the nations around them. We can point to many empty seats in our gatherings, where formerly this one and that one sat and remembered the Lord, and perhaps took an active part in Sunday School work or other branch of service. Those empty seats often speak of empty lives, of robbing the Lord of His due.

But there is a remedy for the one who, like the prodigal son, "comes to himself" and realises in what a far country he lives, and how rich are even the "hired servants" in the father's house. The son not only resolved to "arise and go". *He did it.* "He arose and went." Only then did he see the arms of the father waiting to embrace him, and go on to receive the kiss, the robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf. In Hosea 14:4 God says of Israel: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely". If any backslider should happen to read these lines, "let them return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

There are, of course, conditions under which we can return. We must be sincere. There must be confession of the sin that we have committed, a sense of the dishonour done to the Lord. Hosea, in his last chapter, speaks of Israel returning to the Lord: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously". Later Ephraim says: "What have I to do any more with idols?" (14:2, 8). It is not enough to confess that "other things" have taken the place of the Lord. The idols must be put away. It may mean a radical change in our homes, in our businesses, in our relationships. It is worth while if it restores that happy state of which the poet writes:

*"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?"*

"Will a man rob God?", asks God through His prophet Malachi, and goes on to point out how they have withheld from Him that which was His due. But then He gives them an opportunity to "bring . . . all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

5. THE END OF THE WORLD

What seems so permanent is only passing; what seems so powerful in its antagonism to God will shortly be exposed in its impotence before the "King of kings and Lord of lords". This is the subject of this final article of Mr. Tyson's series.

We wish to speak lastly about the end of the world. We will view this subject under the three aspects considered in the second paper — the physical world, the age, and the "kosmos".

We might take Ephesians 1:10 as our "text". From this verse we see that God's great purpose for the administration of all the times (i.e. "ages"), is to "head up all things in the Christ" — to bring all under His Anointed.

Thus all the different aspects converge to this one *point*. There is, therefore, much overlapping and it is impossible to deal with one aspect without bringing in the others.

The physical world

Please read Hebrews 1:10-12. In our first paper we stressed the importance of believing that God made the universe (verse 10). The One who *brought in* all can equally easily *take away*. The creation, marvellous as it is, is not eternal; it perishes. It grows old — but the Lord remains, never failing, never changing. So, just as we lay aside an old coat for which we have no further use, the Lord also will fold up this present creation when its course is complete.

Other scriptures give more details. Isaiah wrote, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall wax old like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment." In 2 Peter 3 we read, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness" (verses 7-11).

The end of the age

Please have the thirteenth chapter of Matthew open for reference. Here we find "the mysteries of the kingdom". In this present age the kingdom of God is a secret hidden to the outside world. In the age to come it will be plain for all to see.

The seven parables of this chapter show different aspects of the kingdom of God in this present age.

1. The good seed is being sown. It is rejected outright by some, accepted superficially by others, and in still others accepted in truth

and producing eternal fruit. The gospel net is catching many fish — some good and to be preserved, others useless and to be thrown away.

2. But there is an enemy sowing counterfeit seed, producing plants not accurately distinguishable till the harvest at the end of the age. The kingdom of God is a wider thought than the church, although it includes the church. So here the harvest is not the “rapture”, but an event after the “rapture”, when Christ in judgement will take away the wicked out of His kingdom.

3. What started as very small has grown into a great tree in which “birds” (representing evil things) can rest. Not only is it corrupted from without by these evil things; it is also corrupted from within: the leaven of false teaching has tainted the whole lump.

4. Yet what is of God is secure in His divine purpose. The field has been bought; the treasure is safe; all is in Christ’s hands. The “pearl of great price” has been purchased at immeasurable cost.

The result of such teaching, according to the end of the chapter, was that, “they were offended”.

Now let us consider Matthew 24:1-35. We should note two things before going into the detail. Firstly, this chapter is to the Jew and about the land of Israel. The church period is overlooked. In the last verse of the previous chapter the Lord said, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”.

Secondly, we should observe that the disciples ask three questions. We are concerned with only the last two of them: “what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world [i.e. ‘age’]?” The following verses — 4-14 — describe the general conditions of this present age. While they include in principle the church period, they have special application to the Jewish testimony after the “rapture”. They speak of:

- wars, unrest among the nations
- famines, earthquakes, pestilences
- persecution, betrayal, hatred
- false prophets, deceivings, error
- lukewarmness

Those that endure to the end shall be saved. Notice the future tense here — not present, as in the gospel period.

Verses 15-26 introduce a new period beginning when the “abomination of desolation” stands in the holy place. It is a period of such intense persecution and great tribulation for the Jew as never before — so much so, that if God did not intervene and shorten the period, none would be saved alive. But for the elects’ sake the days are shortened. A limit is set to the reign of the persecutor.

Verses 27-31 speak of the Lord’s intervention in power and glory. His second coming is spoken of, but notice the contrast with the “rapture” as we find it in 1 Thessalonians 4:15ff, laid out in the following table:

Matthew 24

the Son of man appears
 all the tribes see Him
 His glory seen as lightning
 He comes in judgment
 no resurrection
 none taken to heaven

mourning

1 Thessalonians 4

the Lord Himself descends
 only believers affected
 His voice heard by believers
 only blessing mentioned
 the sleeping saints raised
 the meeting in the air
 then "forever with the Lord"
 comfort

The rest of chapter 24 and the first thirty verses of chapter 25 are an exhortation to be faithful in watching and waiting, so as to be ready. At the end of chapter 25 we have the judgement of the living nations when the wicked are consigned to eternal damnation and the righteous welcomed to eternal life according to their treatment of "my brethren".

To examine further details of the end of the "age" we turn to our last aspect.

The end of the "kosmos"

Please read the second chapter of Daniel, especially verses 44, 45. The story of the great image in this chapter shows us the history of Gentile rule from its beginning in Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar up to its final overthrow when the God of heaven shall set up His kingdom.

That overthrow, and the events leading up to it, are described in graphic and pictorial detail in the thirteenth to the twentieth chapters of Revelation. Here we read of both the political and the religious sides of man's rule. The political rule is pictured by the beasts. The religious rule is depicted by a woman called "Babylon the great". We will take a quick journey through these chapters, stopping only at the main places.

Firstly, let us stop in Revelation 13:1-18. Here we find the beast (verses 1-10). As Nebuchadnezzar was the first great monarch of world empire, this personage is the last. He has seven heads and ten horns which as we learn later, represent ten kings. He is worshipped by all that dwell on earth, except by the elect. In verses 11-18 we read of the beast out of the earth. He sets up an image of the first beast and compels all to worship it and to have the mark of the beast (here we join with Matthew 24 and the mention of the abomination of desolation).

Now let us go on to Revelation 14:1-12. A redeemed company are seen with Christ on mount Sion. They are Jewish (cp. 7:4ff which tells us they are comprised of twelve thousand from each tribe). The everlasting gospel is preached to all people — the message being, "Fear God . . . for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth . . ." (vv. 6-7). In verse 8 we find the first reference to the fall of "Babylon". Judgment and doom are pronounced on the worshippers of the beast, but "Blessed are they which die in the Lord from henceforth" (vv. 9-13). Finally we have a vision of the earth and of the vine of the earth (vv. 14-20).

In the next chapter the heavenly company are seen worshipping God and the Lamb in view of the seven plagues of judgement (15:1-3).

This is to be contrasted with their praise in view of their redemption in chapter 5. In chapter 16 the last seven plagues are described. There are parallels with what is said in the gospels about the great tribulation.

The first vial, or bowl, falls on all who had the mark of the beast.

The fifth, falling on the throne of the beast, only brings more blasphemy from men.

The sixth opens the way for the kings of the east. Then follows a parenthesis outlining Satan's evil work in preparing man for the great battle of Armageddon (16:13-16).

The seventh vial brings forth a great earthquake on Jerusalem and the cities of the nations (16:17-19). Great Babylon comes up for remembrance. This brings us up to the point where the end of the age and of man's world draw together.

To summarise what we have said so far: during the church age the kingdom of heaven has existed in mystery. Mixed with those who are true there is a great mass of profession seeking wealth, power, prestige, often persecuting the real, and becoming increasingly corrupt, ending in complete apostasy. After the "rapture", when the true church is taken to be for ever with the Lord, we find man's world (in prophecy this is principally the world where the gospel has been longest preached) under a despotic leader, the head of a ten-nation confederacy. Alongside this political structure is a religious power completely opposed to the truth of God in Jesus.

Chapters 17 to 19 of Revelation show the complete overthrow of all this and the setting up of the Lord's kingdom and rule (cp. Daniel 2:44-5).

In chapter 17:1-7 we learn the character of religious Babylon (note how this reminds us of the Babylon of history as portrayed in Daniel). She has sought pomp and power, and is corrupt and cruel. The religious power rests upon the political — the woman rides the beast, and in 17:8-14 this political power — the "beast itself" — again comes briefly into view. The ten kings who reign with the beast are overthrown (v. 17), but not before they themselves have hated and overthrown the woman (v. 16). The religious power is overthrown by the political. But then the political power — now all concentrated in the hand of the beast — is shattered by the Lord personally.

A vivid account of the overthrow of Babylon — the religious power — is given in chapter 18. It was sudden (vv. 8, 10, 17, 19); it was devastating; it was complete (v. 21), it was just (v. 24). In her was found the blood of the prophets and saints.

Let us now proceed to chapter 19 — into the scene in heaven. There are four "hallelujahs" in this chapter. In chapter 5 there was worship for redemption, and for judgement anticipated; in this chapter the worship is for judgement executed. The subject of the chapter is the marriage *supper* of the Lamb, rather than the marriage as such, and so we find the wife, not the bride. It is after this that Christ comes out in conquering glory, as the Word of God, not in grace any more, but as King of kings and Lord of lords (vv. 11-16).

Our final stopping place is the section running from 19:17 to

20:10. Here we read of the final overthrow of man's world prior to the thousand years of Christ's rule. The beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. Satan is bound and the armies of the beast and of the kings of the earth are slain by the sword of the Lord. Then in 20:7-10 we read of the final rebellion following the release of Satan at the end of the thousand years, of the setting up of the great white throne, of the destruction of the "last enemy" — death, and of the passing away of earth and heaven. A new heaven and a new earth appear.

Then comes the last appeal, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be my son".

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

"COME"

The following poem by Miss von Poseck has, we are informed, only recently come to light.

*To Thee, the Coming One,
 Jesus our Lord,
 To Thee, God's Holy Son,
 Jesus the Lord,
 Sing we now joyfully,
 Nearer each day are we,
 Nearer to Home and Thee,
 Jesus, our Lord!*

*Faith shall be turned to sight,
 When we reach Home;
 Ended the darksome night,
 When Thou dost come,
 Oh! morning bright and clear,
 When we Thy shout shall hear,
 That voice well known and dear,
 Calling us Home!*

*No sighing then or tears —
 All joy at Home!
 No sorrows, cares or fears —
 Oh, take us Home!
 Lord! full of love and grace,
 Reveal Thy glorious face;
 Call us to Thine embrace;
 Oh, come, Lord, come!*

C. H. VON POSECK