

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 90
September – December 2013
CONTENTS

	Page
Christ the test of the heart (<i>E.H. Chater</i>)	67
Light affliction – weight of glory (<i>Anon.</i>)	72
Fragment (<i>J.N. Darby</i>)	74
The Man of God (<i>J.L. Dodsworth</i>)	75
The lost hope (<i>C.A. Coates</i>)	78
Presenting our bodies (<i>D.E. Wells</i>)	85
A cloud received Him ... (<i>A.J.H. Brown</i>)	89
Wounded for me (<i>W.G. Ovens</i>)	90
Poetic Pages	91

WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH
(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19)
NO. 90: SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2013

Editorial

Believers on our Lord Jesus Christ face many problems. Millions (especially in the Middle East but in other countries too) are persecuted for the confession of His Name; even here in the United Kingdom some have lost their livelihoods for refusing to do things contrary to their consciences and let us not forget what many young Christians have to put up with at school. Then other believers are afflicted in bodily health, or have suffered bereavement, or are feeling the weight of years, or have family or financial problems. With the deteriorating state of Christendom – many things being embraced that are contrary to God’s word – some believers, even in western countries, have great difficulty in finding a Christian company where they can happily enjoy fellowship.

Against this background, there are three things that should encourage us. Firstly, we have a living Lord who understands all our situations perfectly. Many feel that John’s Gospel was written with the last days particularly in mind; time and again in that Gospel we read that ‘Jesus knew.’ Secondly, the state of affairs in the last days was foreseen in the writing of the Holy Scriptures and guidance given for us as we find ourselves in such times. Thirdly, we can rejoice that the return of our Lord Jesus is at hand. Let us all be ready for it!

Those who prefer shorter articles will perhaps be glad that this issue largely comprises these – mostly of older origin but two comparatively recent. G.S.B.

Editor: G. S. Bacon, 58 Byron Avenue, Coulsdon, Surrey, England. CR5 2JR *Tel:* 020-8660.2915 *E-Mail:* bacon707@btinternet.com
Website: www.wordsofpeaceandtruth.co.uk

CHRIST THE TEST OF THE HEART.

“WHAT think ye of Christ?” (*Matt. 22:42*) is the test for every heart. The time of testing is *now*. The finished work of Christ is the ground of God’s blessing, whether in relation to promise in the past, to the grace which flows from glory in the present, or to men in the future. The heart of each believer in turn is tested by Christ. Happy indeed is the one who when tested is found true to Him! A joyful moment will it be for all such when manifested in His presence. We would call our readers’ attention to five instances in scripture where God applied this test, and to the effect on those who were the subjects of it, that we may profit in our souls by these examples.

Let us first take note of Abraham. The Lord said unto him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee . . . and I will bless thee,” &c. (*Gen. 12:1, 2*). The blessing in its fulness would come through the seed (figure of Christ) which the Lord promised him later (*Gen. 15*). Now it is recorded of this dear servant of God, that *by faith*, when he was called thus, *he obeyed* (*Heb. 11:8*). But when we examine the detail of his path, we find there was a measure of failure at the commencement. Instead of getting out from his kindred and his father’s house unto the promised land, he took his nephew Lot and his father Terah with him, and stopped short in Haran. And he further failed by going down into Egypt in a time of famine instead of trusting the Lord in Canaan. All these things which were written aforetime are written for our learning and admonition. If God points out the failures of His saints, it is with the view of our warning, lest we should fall into similar snares, and fail to respond to the call of God and the testing of our hearts’ affections in relation to Christ. Many are held back through natural ties, the love of dear relatives, and the clinging in consequence to something in this world, and are thus hindered from taking up their cross, accepting with joy the reproach of Christ, and from entering now upon heavenly blessing and

maintaining a pilgrim and stranger character upon the earth, worshipping God in the beauty of holiness (as prefigured by Abraham's tent and altar). Christ was indeed the test of the heart of Abraham. The promises of God in relation to Christ, of whom Isaac was a figure, eventually governed his heart, and being clear of those things which hindered at the start of his career, he stands out on the page of scripture as one who in a wonderful way stood the test. And he was called "the friend of God" (*2 Chron. 20:7; Jas. 2:23*).

A second remarkable case is found in Jonathan (1 Sam. 18). David, the anointed of God, figure of Christ, had overcome Goliath, and delivered from the armies of the Philistines. Standing before Saul the king, with the giant's head in his hand, we read that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1 Sam. 17:55-58; 18:1). Next they made a covenant, because Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Moreover, such was his delight in David, that he stripped himself of his princely robe and his military accoutrements – his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. He was so absorbed by and enraptured with his object, that all that distinguished him as the first prince in Israel, the son of the king, and as a leading warrior, was sacrificed for him without reserve. It is a beautiful lesson for every saint of God. Is Christ, the true Object, so engrossing our souls, that in response to His love we sacrifice for Him that which we should naturally glory in after the flesh? (*See 2 Corinthians 11:18; Philippians 3:4-8*).

But Jonathan was exposed to a greater test. Saul in his jealousy sought David's life, and he had to flee to the wilderness. Would the one who loved him as his own soul follow him *there*? The test was too searching. David went into the wilderness, but Jonathan went to *his house*. Jesus has said, he that forsaketh not *all that he hath* cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:33). It is one thing to give up here for Christ. It is quite another to identify ourselves wholly with Christ in the hour of His rejection. It is this in principle which

was lacking with Jonathan. His position in this world held him. He gave up externals, but though he loved David as his own soul, when fully tested he lacked. He went on with Saul who rejected David, and he shared his fall in death on Mount Gilboa. Let us challenge our hearts by this searching narrative; how far have we identified ourselves with a rejected Christ. What think ye of Christ?

In Mark 10:17 we get a third case. An unnamed one, when Jesus had gone forth *into the way, came running*, and, kneeling to him, asked, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” If Jesus were good, He was God, as His reply clearly shows. But this His questioner did not apprehend. Putting him on the ground of the commandments of the law, which he professed, he maintained that he had done his duty to his neighbour, saying, “Master, all these things have I observed from my youth.” The heart of Jesus was drawn to him. Beholding him He loved him. But Jesus is God, and knows every heart. And every one who draws near to Him must be tested. “One thing thou lackest,” said He: “go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and *follow me*.” The scripture says, if thou shalt offend in one point, thou art guilty of all (Jas. 2:10). The tenth commandment says: Thou shalt not covet. This poor man’s heart was set on wealth in this world. Christ offered him lasting wealth in another world, but it meant letting go here. Christ Himself, however, would be his present and eternal gain. But natural advantage had too strong a hold upon him: the test was too great. He was sad at that saying, and *went away* grieved: for he had great possessions. Temporal things so ruled the heart, that he never started at all for the true goal. He would have liked long life here to enjoy his portion beneath the sun. But Christ, heavenly treasure and eternal gain, had no attraction for the heart governed by things visible, and he shrank back at once from the pathway of faith when tested. What a striking object-lesson for each of our hearts to-day!

In turning to a fourth instance in the case of Moses, we find a striking example of ready self-sacrifice for Christ. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” (Heb. 11:24-26). In the wisdom of God, this child of Levi was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, and, failing an heir to the throne, he might even have been exalted to the chief rule in the Egyptian kingdom. But whilst divine Providence placed him in this remarkable position, in which, if he had reasoned according to nature, he might have greatly succoured God’s people and his own, faith answered to God’s call, and he stepped down from his exalted position. Everything that flesh would value was sacrificed for the reproach of Christ. He valued God’s test. Power, position, pleasures, possessions, place, prospects and privileges, all were given up without a regret. He knew what to refuse, what to choose and what to esteem. Principle to him was more important than all. He apprehended that it was a question of the glory of Christ, and he stood the test. To this devoted soul it was gain, not loss. He became a wonderful witness for God. Forsaking the possibility of occupying the heathen throne of the Pharaohs, as king of the base kingdom of Egypt, he became king in Jeshurun, the upright nation of God.* Suffering affliction with his people, he led them in triumph out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, but failing to honour God, by manifestation of human weakness, at a critical moment, though permitted to view the promised land from Mount Pisgah, he was not allowed to enter it. Apart from this, he stands out on the page of scripture as a wonderful example of that which should characterise the Christian morally to-day. Has Christ such a place in our hearts that we value the glory and reproach of His

* Jeshurun signifies “upright” or “righteous,” which Israel will be in the coming day (Deut. 33:5,26).

name above all that Satan would use to beguile us from the blessed will of God?

Fifthly, in Saul of Tarsus – as Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles – we have perhaps the most striking instance of one who answered to the test of God. Arrested by divine power and grace from the glory in the midst of a career of blasphemy and wickedness, persecuting the church of God, he became a faithful and devoted follower of Christ from that moment till the end of his pathway here. He started well, ran well and finished well. He could say towards the close, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7). He stood the test of Christ throughout. Christ was his life, his model, his object, his goal, his strength (Phil. 1-4). No other had so much to trust in after the flesh as Paul. Circumcised the eighth day according to the divine ordinance given to Abraham, of the stock of Israel, the privileged earthly people of God, of the tribe of Benjamin, the favoured youngest son; an Hebrew of the Hebrews, that is, of the highest rank; as touching the law, a Pharisee, the straitest sect of the Jews’ religion; concerning zeal, persecuting the church, the dearest object of the heart of Christ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless, a model moral and religious man in the eyes of his fellows. Saul of Tarsus clearly was no mean man. But the abounding grace of God enabled him to say from the heart, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (ver. 7). He collapsed completely before the glory of God’s accepted Man. With Christ and everlasting glory before his soul, he dropped as worthless, and counted as dung all things here, that he might arrive at the excellency of the knowledge of that blessed One (ver. 8). He found throughout his course that there was that in Christ which could render a man on earth superior to all that a world lying in the wicked one could offer on its best side to his heart. Saul was no lewd man of the baser sort, trafficking in all kinds of moral iniquity, but a model Pharisee, morally a head and shoulders taller than his compeers. But God presented to him the

Man who filled His own heart, and Saul was won. Every thing through Christ became totally eclipsed in his soul, so that Christ became the great absorbing Object of his heart from start to finish. He stood God's great test – Christ – and became apparently (without in any way disparaging others) the brightest witness to His glory in the Spirit's power the world has ever seen.

Happy indeed is that soul to-day who, avoiding the mistakes and failures of God's dear servants, written in scripture for our admonition, seeks to glorify God, in answering to His call and test, in the way that those spoken of and others have done. May each reader of these lines be enabled to say through grace, "To me to live is Christ."

Extracted from "The Believer's Friend," Vol.II [1910]; attributed to E.H.C., no doubt meaning E.H. Chater (1845-1915).

LIGHT AFFLICTION – WEIGHT OF GLORY.

(2 Cor. 4:17, 18.)

IN writing to the Corinthians the apostle could say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

How many of us look at affliction in that way? Do we not rather seek to be relieved of it, if indeed we do not actually resent it in a spirit of rebellion? I think the secret of our failure in this matter may be found in taking note of what we are looking at. The apostle added, when he wrote to the Corinthians, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

When we find ourselves in the path of affliction – and how many of God's people everywhere are passing through trial and sorrow and suffering at the present time? – we are prone to be cast

down, and, alas, often are, because we are looking at "*the things that are seen*," and what are they? Each can answer that question for himself. To one it is straitened circumstances; to another sorrow in the family circle; while to yet another it is personal suffering. It may be also affliction in connection with seeking to be true to the Lord and a desire to maintain what is due to Him. But, says the apostle: "Our *light* affliction." Fidelity to the Lord had cost him much truly! He had suffered the loss of all things, and the very people who owed their portion to his faithful service slighted him and turned away from him: it was a real thing to Paul to be a Christian, and he trod a path which was one of affliction, but severe as the ordeal was through which he had to pass, he spoke of it as "light affliction." And why could he do so? Because he was not looking "*at the things that are seen*," but at the things which are *not seen*. Paul was not looking at the unfaithfulness of the brethren, nor the hatred of the world; he was not taking account of his reduced circumstances since the days when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, nor the hours of nakedness and hunger which he had known, but he looked upon the faithfulness of the Lord whom he had seen in the glory. Could He ever change; would He ever fail? Never, it was impossible. He looked also upon the love of God – so true, so strong, so changeless, and upon that land of glory into which the Lord Jesus had entered, and into which all the saints shall enter by-and-by. If on earth he was reviled, he reviled not again; if he suffered he threatened not. He had already entered into a kingdom which could never be moved, and he had his place in the assembly against which the gates of hell could never prevail. To him it was given to enter the holiest where the high priest of old could only go once a year, and that not without blood; and he could utter: Abba Father! with a sense of nearness thrilling his soul which death itself could never destroy. These were some of the things on which the apostle looked, and as he did so he said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." For him it wrought a

weight of glory, because he looked not at the things which were seen, but at the things which are not seen. And in the afflictions through which he passed he learned what God was and gained an understanding of His ways, because he took up the exercise, which those afflictions awakened, with God. In this way the afflictions wrought a weight of glory for the apostle, and how ardently one desires that the afflictions through which we are passing might appear light because of what have seen in the unseen world, and work for us also a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I understand this to mean that the apostle will have honour and dignity in the day of glory which may not be the portion of others, because in the path of affliction and trial he subjected himself to the Lord and learned the secrets of divine pleasure, which are only known to those who are brought near to God. In the day of glory a larger sphere of service and administration will be given to the apostle, and indeed to all for whom the light affliction has wrought a weight of glory. Let us bear in mind, however, that it is only wrought while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

Anon.

Extracted from "The Believer's Friend," Vol. II [1910].

Fragment

The triumph of grace was seen in this, that when man's enmity had cast out Jesus from the earth, God's love brought in salvation by that very act – came in to atone for the sin of those who had rejected Him. In the view of the fullest development of man's sin faith sees the fullest manifestation of God's grace. Where does faith see the greatest depth of man's sin and hatred of God? ***In the cross***; and at the same glance it sees the greatest extent of God's triumphant love and mercy to man. The spear of the centurion which pierced the side of Jesus only brought out that which spoke of love and mercy.

Extracted from "Why do I groan?" by J.N. Darby (1800-82)

THE MAN OF GOD

1 Timothy 6: 6-14; 2 Timothy 3: 14-17

In the first passage we read, we see what kind of person the man of God is. He is free from the snare and allurements of riches. He has a right and sober judgment about finance, the matter which works so much damage in the fabric of our present-day society. The word tells us that if anyone “will be rich,” that is to say, if it is his burning desire and driving ambition, he is sure to run into troubles, and this especially in the case of a believer. Not but what we are to do rightly and well in our ordinary occupations, and let us all give thanks for whatever just remuneration comes our way. Then we find the true pathway clearly defined: “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” Timothy is charged to keep this commandment until the day of Christ, and without doubt the word is written for our learning also, a guideline for each one of us in difficult days.

The second epistle shows that the man of God is one who is taught, maybe reproved, corrected where necessary, and instructed in righteousness by the inspired word of God bearing in upon him continually. We should look carefully at this passage “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The Greek expression only occurs here – nowhere else. It means literally “God inbreathed.” “All scripture is God inbreathed, and profitable.” I believe the man of God has this truth very deeply in his soul, and this equips him for “all good works.”

Now turning to the Old Testament, and reading it in the light and authority of the New, we find considerable enlargement as to the character of the man of God, and as to how such a one is used by God in very varied situations. The first reference in the scripture comes in Deuteronomy 33. Here we find “Moses the man of God” A prayerful man, as Psalm 90 shows, just this side of Jordan, and now nearing the end of his pilgrimage, he proceeds to

bless all the people of God. How rightly he reflects the heart of God and of Christ in this. Let us always remember that we are to love all the saints, make supplication for all saints, and salute every saint in Christ Jesus.

Next, in 1 Samuel 9 we find Saul and his servant looking for the asses which were lost. No success attends their way until they seek counsel from Samuel, whom the servant declares to be “a man of God, and an honourable man.” Such a commendation calls to mind the word in Proverbs 22: “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” Clearly Samuel enjoys the loving favour of the Lord’s confidence, and divine enabling to “show the word of God” to Saul. How good it would be for us to know our Lord Jesus Christ in this kind of way.

Moving on to Rehoboam and Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12 we find there is conflict as to leadership: personal ambition coming before the well-being and unity of the people of God. The end of the matter was major division: two tribes on the one hand, and ten tribes on the other. That is how it worked out in Israel’s day, and sadly one fears it cannot be said that the churches today are altogether free from this painful plague. Notice, however, that just as open conflict was about to break forth the man of God appears, and he says, “Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me.” We are told that the people hearkened to the word of the Lord. The passage is so important that it is repeated in 2 Chronicles 11, only there it says “they obeyed the words of the Lord.” As we know from 1 Samuel 15, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken that the fat of rams.” Nor are we to forget that division is no testimony to the unity of the faith.

If we are seeking to follow New Testament patterns are we not bound to note that rule in the churches is operated and preserved in

plurality – always so? “Two are better than one ... and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccles. 4:9-12). So we read of elders (*plural*) being ordained in every church and in every city (*Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5*). The exhortation in Hebrews 13 is to “remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God” [*or, “remember your leaders ...”*] (v. 7) and to “obey them that have the rule over you” [*or, “obey your leaders”*] (v.17). “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (*1 Timothy 5:17*) – always plural. The apostle sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the Church, and elsewhere sent greetings to “the bishops and deacons” (*or, “overseers and ministers”*) at Philippi. How happy in Church responsibility and leadership for this truth to be worked out in love, none seeking personal place or pre-eminence, but rather the increase of the body of Christ, and “the edifying of itself in love” (*Ephesians 4:16*).

Pursuing our enquiry, in the second Book of Kings chapter 4 we find that the man of God is a holy man (v. 9), and that he has great power in prayer. In the kind of day in which we live one feels the need to remind oneself often that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (*Hebrews 12:14*). Both chapters 1 and 6 refer to young people, the latter chapter showing that they regard the man of God with affectionate esteem. He understands their difficulties and where no issue of the truth is involved, is prepared to go a certain distance along with them.

Closing our meditation, can we look at the books of Ezra and Nehemiah? Ezra means ‘help,’ we are told, and Nehemiah means ‘comfort’ or consolation. Surely this is just what we all need: help and comfort from God. The two books stand together, telling of days of revival, recovery and repair; days of dedication; wonderful days. In Ezra there is reference to “Moses the man of God” in chapter 3. The people remembered what he had told them by the word of the Lord regarding the altar, and the burnt-offerings, and the free-will offerings. And they began to offer.

In Nehemiah 12 the people are stirred to the very depths of their souls, yet regulated “according to the commandment of David the man of God,” (v. 24) who skilfully helps the saints into the service of God. It says that “they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.” What a tremendous testimony there is from God’s praising people! “Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord” (*Psalms 144:15*). Let us all thank God for including us among them. Amen.

Substance of an address by John L. Dodsworth at Diss, 18 July 1981.

-- o O o --

THE LOST HOPE

The promise of John 14:3, is on the eve of being fulfilled; the threefold summons of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 will soon be heard; the wise and foolish virgins of Matthew 25 are about to be eternally separated: in short, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again.

That promise, first falling from His own lips in John 14, formed the substance of a special revelation given to Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:15), and was thrice repeated in the *last* message which a glorified Christ sent down to His waiting Bride. Revelation 22:7, 12, 20.

The Lord did not intend these words to be an empty sound, devoid of meaning, power, or effect upon the hearts of His loved ones; they were uttered to kindle there a responsive flame of joyous expectation. And this *was* the effect upon the hearts of the early believers. The Lord's return was to them a "BLESSED HOPE". It was no visionary prospect, but a reality which commanded their affections and could be seen expressed in their everyday lives. They waited "for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7); they waited for God's "Son from

heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:10); they "went forth to meet the Bridegroom."

It was this that made them practically a heavenly people. Links with earth were broken; connections with the world were severed. Earth's wealth and splendour, its gilded attractions, all its bewitching sorceries, have lost their charm and power over a man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and who is continually expecting that Saviour's voice to translate him in a moment to endless glory. He is so dazzled by the bright visions which pass before 'faith's transpiercing eye,' that this world's glory seems dull and dim. So the early Christians were a separate and an unworldly people. Their hearts had been touched by a Saviour's love; they knew that His precious blood had washed away all their sins, and their whole souls were fired by the expectation of seeing His face and being with Him and like Him for ever.

The language of their hearts was –

"Oh, worldly pomp and glory!
Your charms are spread in vain!
I've heard a sweeter story,
I've found a truer gain.
Where Christ a place prepareth,
There is my loved abode!
There shall I gaze on Jesus;
There shall I dwell with God!"

Their heavenly mindedness drew down upon them the scorn, contempt, and violence of men. By their separation from the world they testified against it that its deeds were evil, and the world hated, despised, and rejected them, thus affording them the high honour of fellowship with their adorable Master. They could afford to "take it patiently" knowing that His coming drew nigh (James 5:7, 8), when His own approving smile would more than compensate for all the contradiction of sinners they had to endure.

Ah! the Lord's coming was not to *them* a doctrine, or a theory, but a HOPE of strengthening, sanctifying, transforming power.

Satan sought by every means to quench their testimony. The fiery sword of persecution was unsheathed against them with relentless severity, until Satan found that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, and "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." So when violence failed he tried corruption, and began to seduce the church by offering her the very things which Jesus had refused – the world and its glory.

Would she have them? Would she accept flattery and aggrandisement, at the hands of the world, those very hands which were stained with the blood of her rejected and murdered Lord? Alas! she forsook her first love. She laid aside the gory crown of martyrdom and assumed the glittering tiara of earthly grandeur and supremacy. As the world crept in, the hope of the Lord's return died out. That hope which *had* burnt with such a vehement and ardent flame gradually grew dim. The heart ceased to long for Him; the eye ceased to watch for Him. Solemn words, "*While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*". A worldly church could not cherish the prospect of the Lord's return. At the same time the glorious truths of eternal redemption, the present forgiveness and justification of all believers and their possession of eternal life in the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ, His sent One, were obscured, perverted, or denied; so that all certainty and assurance was taken even from those who were really the children of God; and the thought of the Lord's coming became a terror for the conscience rather than a delight for the heart.

The Lord's coming was referred to the end of the world, and invested with ideas of terror and judgment, which plainly proves that the church had sunk down to the level of the world. The world's guilty conscience can only predict a day of certain judgment if Jesus comes again. But *believers* know, or ought to know, that there is no judgment for them (John 5:24); Jesus has

borne their sins at His first coming, and has whispered the wonderful love-secret into their ears that He is coming again to receive them unto Himself, that where He is there they may be also. He is coming for us not as a Judge, but as a Bridegroom – coming that He may have us where every affection of His blessed heart can flow out unhinderedly upon us. How strangely sad that such a hope should have been lost! Yet so it was for more than fifteen hundred years.

Theologians wrote of the Lord's coming, it is true; but how did they write? They wrote of His appearing as the Judge of quick and dead; of His solemn session on the Great White Throne; of His dividing the sheep from the goats; and they spoke of that day as being the time when we should know whether we were saved or not; for they had not the present knowledge of forgiveness or salvation which God gives in His word to all believers. See John 5:24; Acts 13:38, 39; Colossians 1:12 - 14.

Jesus will appear as the Judge and every eye shall see Him; but this is not the character of His coming for believers. Before He comes as the Judge to the world, He will come as the Bridegroom to call away His saints. Hence we find that when He appears publicly in glory and power, His saints appear *with* Him. Colossians 3:4; Jude 14; Revelation 19:8 - 14. His coming as the Bridegroom is the Hope of the church, and this was lost sight of when the church became worldly in the time of Constantine; and all through the dark ages of papal supremacy, and even in the brighter days of the Reformation, it was never recovered, and might truly be called

THE LOST HOPE

A little over a century ago [*now nearly two centuries ago – Ed.*], God was pleased to restore many precious truths from the obscurity into which they had been driven. Amongst others, the full present knowledge and enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, and the possession of eternal life, were seen to be the portion of

every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. The perfection of the atoning work of the Son of God in clearing all believers from all their sins was apprehended more fully than before. The fact that believers are seen of God as dead and risen with Christ, and now by the Holy Spirit have power to *reckon themselves* dead indeed unto sin, was discovered to be the secret of liberty, and of a holy life. It was also seen that believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus united to Christ in glory as the members of His body; then shone forth again that blessed Star of hope which had been hidden so long by clouds of worldliness and unbelief. THE LOST HOPE began to burn again in a few loyal and devoted hearts. The midnight cry began to ring out – "Behold the Bridegroom; go ye out to meet him."

It was at once felt that conformity to the world's fashions, customs, and conversation was inconsistent with THE HOPE; in fact, as it was cherished it exerted its purifying effects (1 John 3:3) upon the hearts and lives of those who had it, and they were marked by separation from the world, by simplicity in life, and by godliness in conversation. Their watchword seemed to be "Let us watch and be sober." They were a holy, happy, heavenly people.

Years passed on. From those in whose hearts the cry first sounded it went forth to a sleeping church. What numbers of slumbering ones were aroused by that cry! What a trimming of lamps; what a girding of loins ensued! Thousands will have cause to bless God throughout eternity that it reached their ears. Professors who had but an empty lamp, were led to obtain a supply of the precious oil of which they were destitute; doubting believers to rest in the finished work of Christ, and to rejoice in a known and accomplished salvation; and many dear saints of God saw new glories in Christ as the Head of His body, the Church. God was preparing the way for the return of His Son.

Yes, a hundred [*now almost 200*] years and more are passed, and that "blessed hope" remains unfulfilled. The Lord is still

seated on His Father's throne, and His people await the moment of His rising and descent into the air. Precious and true as ever is His closing word – "Surely I come quickly!" and He looks for the fitting response – "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

Can it be untimely or inappropriate to ask, is this the present attitude of His bride? Alas! even yet many saints are actually ignorant of the fact that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"; while the scoffer asks boldly, "Where is the promise of his coming?" On the other hand, multitudes in Christendom have heard that Jesus is coming, and have been convinced from Scripture of the truth of the doctrine. Some have heard that midnight cry, and it has had the effect of causing them to go forth "to meet him"; hence, for more than a century [*nearly two centuries*] small companies of believers have gathered to His name, to remember Him who was once offered to bear their sins, and who will appear the second time, apart from the question of sin, to effect the salvation of the body; to these latter a few words are now addressed.

Are you, beloved, WAITING and WATCHING? Is such the character which is expressed by your lives? Very loath should we be to give up the *doctrine* of the Lord's coming, but do we know the reality of it as a HOPE? Let the truth be faced and owned. Do our words, our ways, our surroundings bear testimony to our profession that we have "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven"? Does He who reads our hearts and discerns our secret thoughts know that we dearly cherish this precious truth, possess in power this blessed HOPE, and day by day eagerly await its fulfilment? Must we not confess that in many cases where the *truth* of the Lord's coming is held, it fails to detach the heart from the world, to separate it from earthly things, and connect it with brighter things above? Surely in such cases, though the truth is held,

THE HOPE IS LOST.

For aught we know, the Lord may come today. If so, in what state will He find us? With what are our hearts taken up, and on what subjects are our tongues moving? The Lord Himself? His unchanging love? His speedy return? The Lord grant that we may be in a state

"Like that which was found in His people of old,
Who tasted His love, and whose hearts were on fire
While they waited, in patience, His face to behold".

And what was the spiritual state of that "people of old" – the Simeons and Annas of that day? The Spirit of God tells us (Luke 2) that they were "just and devout"; serving God "with fastings and prayers night and day"; speaking "of HIM to *all them* that looked for redemption in Jerusalem"; men and women in the power and current of the Holy Spirit.

Oh! saints of God, what course can we adopt other than to bow low before Him, and own that we have lost the reality and freshness of "that blessed hope"; that we have allowed the things of earth to enter our hearts, and frustrate its separating power; meanwhile praying that in His great mercy He will revive again in our hearts, and restore in sanctifying power to our souls, this most precious HOPE? Nor let us forget that cheering word – "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (*Luke 12:37*).

Oh! beloved saints, let us awake to the fact that He is just about to return! let us re-trim our lamps, if need be, again and again; let us "be filled with the Spirit," that we may possess, enjoy, and exhibit the effects of this HOPE in living power; meanwhile seeking, in the power of the same Spirit, to "occupy" till he come [*Luke 19:13*].

C.A. Coates (1862-1945)

PRESENTING OUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE

Romans 12 verse 1 speaks of our presenting our bodies to God as a living sacrifice which is holy and acceptable to God. I would like to speak this evening firstly about how the members of our bodies have been used in sinful activity before we came to the Lord; secondly how the Lord Jesus used the members of His body and finally how the Lord has identified Himself with us so that we may use our members for His pleasure. We read in Romans “As you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness” (Rom 6:19).

God has given us a body in which are set different members that we use for different purposes. We have hands with which we do many things; feet, which we use for walking; eyes for seeing; ears for hearing, a mouth for eating etc. Some of our members are voluntarily used, others work automatically, such as the heart, lungs and so on, and we do not have the ability to stop them working. We have a sinful nature, which we have inherited from our forefathers and, left to ourselves, we can do nothing about that.

Its activities are wholly sinful; it is beyond reform. The scripture calls it “the flesh” and the Christian is to hold it as dead even now because its end will be the grave. By nature we use the members of our bodies with self as the centre and everything we do has self as its aim. We use our eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet for the benefit of ourselves. I will not speak more about this because the Gospel is about the blessed God and what He has done in coming in Christ, to meet us in our need.

When Jesus came into the world, God prepared Him a body and so He had members of His body as we do. But He used His members in a completely different way and everything He did was for the service and fulfilment of the will of God, not for Himself but as the expression of His love for God and for us.

We use the expression “it’s in your hands” and we also have the statement in John 13 that the Father has given all things into the hands of Jesus. God gave into the hands of Jesus the accomplishment of His will in relation to the world and all mankind, knowing that in faithfulness He would not look back until every detail had been accomplished.

Now even before this took place, we read in Paul’s epistle to the Colossians that the worlds were created by Christ. David uses the expression in Psalm 8 that the heavens were the work of His fingers, so that both the power of His hands as well as the delicacy of His fingers were expressed in the creation of the heavens and earth.

But in His life, we also see how the Lord Jesus used His hands to express His love in so many cases of need. In Mark’s Gospel we have several cases where Jesus took people by the hand — Simon Peter’s mother-in-law who had been sick, a little girl of 12 years old, a boy who was possessed by a demon, a man who was blind. How expressive of the case of need was this action of Jesus, in taking them by the hand! We find Him freely touching a leper whom others would not even come near.

I would like to remind you of Satan’s cruelty by the hand of man, for he incited wicked men to take nails and crucify Him, nailing His hands to a cross. It was as if Satan would seek to prevent Jesus using His hands any more in love for man. Yet this very act became the mark of His love, for in resurrection He said “Behold My hands and My feet” and to Thomas “bring thy finger here and see My hands; and bring thy hand and put it into My side.” His very wounds became the witness to His love.

Our feet are made of very durable cells yet they are extremely sensitive. God has made it this way to teach us the idea of durability yet sensitivity. The Lord Jesus used His feet to go after us as lost sheep. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. In Him we see both the persistency of love, for he went on seeking

“until He found it” as presented in Luke 15, yet also the extreme sensitivity that He showed to all who came to Him. We see Him weary with His journey in John 4 speaking to the woman at the well.

Those same feet were transfixed with cruel nails to the cross in the same manner as His hands, as if to stop Him going anywhere else to bring the wonderful good news of the Gospel to mankind. As to man’s feet, Hebrews 10 verse 29 speaks of those who have “trodden under foot the Son of God.” What a contrast!

When we think of His ears, we read in Isaiah 50 verse 4 “He [the Lord God] wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the instructed.” God gave Him “the tongue of the instructed, that [He] should know how to succour by a word him that is weary.” Every morning He was in touch with His Father. How is it with us? Do we listen to God’s voice every morning? How often He speaks and we turn away from His voice, blocking it out that we may do what WE want to do instead of learning to do His will! In Acts 7 verse 57 we read of the crowd blocking their ears so that they should hear no more of what Stephen was saying to them, because it cut them to the heart. God wants us to listen to His voice; to pray and to remain in communication with Him in thanksgiving and worship.

So we have thought about the way in which the Lord Jesus used His hands and fingers, His feet, His eyes, His mouth in love for His Father and in His love for us.

We have seen how man, inspired by Satan, reacted to this in attempting to stop such activity in love — nailing His hands and feet to the Cross, and in covering Him up when His eyes had been used in bringing Peter to repentance when the cock crew. God has put all things into His hands. He has put all things under His feet. He has honoured Him in heaven and will shortly honour Him on earth in the very place where He was so dishonoured by man.

Now in conclusion, I want to turn to an illustration in the Old Testament (2 Kings 4) when Elisha raised to life a young child. It is a picture of the Lord Jesus and His personal involvement in communicating life to us.

Elisha came into the house of the Shunammite where the child lay dead upon the bed and he went in and shut the door upon them both and prayed. He would shut out every other influence. Have we had this experience of a personal transaction with the Lord Jesus? He would take us away from every other influence and remain with us alone. The Lord said to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." What a thing to hear the Lord Jesus praying for you — for me! What is He saying?

He is interceding for you and me as believers on Himself. He is pleading His own work in having borne our guilt and having borne our sins in His own body on the tree. He is asking for forgiveness for our deepest sins for His name's sake. "If any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world." Dear friends, what a Friend we have in Jesus!

And now Elisha goes up and lies upon the child. Look at what he does, laying his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, his hands upon his hands and bending over him. See how he identifies himself with the child! The Lord Jesus has identified Himself with us in all our need. His mouth, which spoke words of such blessing, He has placed upon my mouth which was full of cursings and blasphemy! His eyes, purer than to behold iniquity, which see all things and know the extent of my sin, were placed upon my eyes, so blind to the grace and glory of God! His hands which made the world, and which had been nailed to the Cross for my sake, were placed upon my hands, so defiled, self-willed and

occupied with self-advancement. All that I was by nature and all that I had done against God and man, He took upon Himself and bore its judgment at the hand of God that I might go free. See what a result we have here! The infusion of a new life flows through us. “As to all that Thou hast given to Him, He should give them life eternal.” Firstly the flesh of the child grew warm. Then the lad sneezed seven times and opened his eyes! What a wonderful result! It is the power of life in new creation given by Christ. “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (John 5:21).

May God grant to us that our hearts may become warm and in love to Him, we may live to serve Him with each member of our bodies — Him who gave Himself for us and who says: “This is my body which is given for you;” ... this is “my blood which is poured out for you.”

Substance of a preaching by David E. Wells.

“A cloud received Him out of their sight”

Acts 1:9

The Lord led His loved ones out as far as Bethany and, lifting up His hands in priestly grace and blessing, was parted from them.

We can understand in some degree their feelings as they saw their beloved Lord rise from among them. They gazed upwards, watching Him ascend. A cloud came in between, but still they gazed, expecting the cloud to pass. How thankful we should be that the cloud *did not pass!*

The last view of a loved one is always what remains, and if the disciples had seen the Lord far, far away in the sky, He would ever have been far off from them in their mind, and we, too, should have thought of Him as far away.

Thank God, no-one has seen Him far off. He was near to them when the cloud received Him, and to their hearts He was ever *just*

behind the cloud with outstretched hands. For us it is the same. What a comfort in time of sorrow and pressure to know that He is near – *just behind the cloud*, caring for us with priestly interest and affection, ready to hear our slightest call!

Paul is in the good of this when he says to the Philippians, “Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near.”

He gives us the privilege to walk in the path of humility which He perfectly trod, and all His sympathy and succour is at hand to help us downward. He is close to us – just behind the cloud.

A.J.H. Brown (1866-1934)

WOUNDED FOR ME.

IN the Autumn of 1917 and just after experiencing some of the air-raids on London, I went to live in a small country town. In bed one night I took up a magazine and read the following story: – “An old clergyman during the war was staying at a London hotel. He was walking down the street one day and came up with a wounded soldier who was painfully making his way along on crutches. The clergyman stopped. ‘Thank you,’ he said earnestly, ‘Thank you for being wounded for me!’ The soldier looked up in astonishment. I expect it had never occurred to him in that light. Many people sent cigarettes or organised concerts for wounded soldiers but few ever thanked them. It made the heavy burden he had to bear a little easier that someone had cared to stop and thank him! The soldier was amazed! Then the quiet voice went on: ‘I can tell you of Someone who was wounded for you.’ The look of surprise deepened. ‘Wounded for me, Sir?’ ‘Yes,’ said the old clergyman. ‘Wounded for our transgressions (yours and mine), bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.’ Then he told him very simply the wonderful story of the cross.”

As I read this story in bed that night it seemed to thrill me – losses and terrible war experiences seemed to fade and the simple

old Gospel story shone out brighter than ever. I had heard the Gospel often and believed it years before, but that night it gripped me afresh. I felt I would like to sing for ever “Wounded for ME.” He, the Son of God, wounded for me! The words of the chorus came to me and, fearing I might forget them in the morning, I got out of bed and put them on paper and then in a few days sat down to the piano and found the little tune. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this chorus have been sent out and many have been helped. May it help *you*. Do you believe He was wounded for you? He was. Receive Him, thank Him, and then serve Him till you see Him face to face. *By W.G. Ovens (1870-1945)*

POETIC PAGES

Wounded For Me!

Wounded for me, wounded for me,
There on the cross He was wounded for me;
Gone my transgressions and now I am free.
All because Jesus was wounded for me.

Dying for me, dying for me,
There on the cross He was dying for me;
Now in His death my redemption I see,
All because Jesus was dying for me.

Risen for me, risen for me,
Up from the grave He has risen for me,
Now evermore from death's sting I am free.
All because Jesus has risen for me.

Living for me, living for me,
Up in the skies He is living for me;
Daily He's pleading and praying for me,
All because Jesus is living for me.

Coming for me, coming for me,
Soon to the air He is coming for me; / P.T.O.

Then with what joy His dear face I shall see,
Oh, how I praise Him—He's coming for me.

Verse 1 is by W.G. Ovens; verses 2-5 by Gladys W. Roberts.

The Dwelling Place

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place
For generations past;
And we shall find our home in Thee
When we reach Heaven at last.

To Eden's verdure Thou didst come
Man's company to share;
Yet no sweet fellowship didst find,
But sinners hiding there.

Then Noah's waters must engulf
That whole revolting race;
And searching dove returns because
Its foot has found no place.

But then, at last, with Abraham,
Towards Sodom Thou didst walk;
And God, with man, of righteousness,
And sin and mercy talk.

When Jacob had his steps retraced
And purged his house, as well,
Thou sharedst with him Thy secrets at
The altar of Bethel.

When Moses turned aside to see
And of the bush enquire,
He learned how God, with man, could dwell,
Yet be consuming fire.

And when the Red Sea's shore had seen
Israel's deliverance,

They sang of dwelling in the mount
Of Thine inheritance.

Although, in tabernacle shrine,
Were only priests allowed;
All Israel knew Thy presence in
The glory of the cloud.

By day it rose above the camp
In folds of billowing white;
Then lit their tents with rosy hue
Throughout the desert night.

The ark stood in the Jordan's bed
Till all the people crossed;
Thy presence showed the Canaanites
All hope for them was lost

The mighty walls of Jericho
Loomed like an Ararat,
A circling ark, a trumpet blast,
A shout ... and they fell flat.

The Philistines control presumed
Of captured ark, until,
They found their Dagon fish-god prone
And smashed upon the sill.

Where were the shoulders of the priests?
The ark borne in a cart!
And David learned, through Uzzah's death,
The holy God Thou art.

To make for Thee a dwelling place
The heart of David filled;
Yet, he must learn his blood-stained hands
Would not that temple build. / P.T.O.

Oh! What a day, when Solomon,
With peace on every side,
Completed that great temple for
Thy glory to reside.

And though the glory cloud appeared
And priests, in service, failed,
No house on earth could Thee contain;
Thine Essence still was veiled.

Ezekiel laboured 'neath the load
Of Israel's sinful past
And all the trials they would face,
When from their land out-cast.

He saw Thy presence leave the house,
Then pass the Eastern Gate;
Then, ling'ring on the mountain top,
He saw the glory wait.

Then, the remembered covenant ...
With flock now gone astray,
The Shepherd seeks His scattered sheep
In dark and cloudy day.

The promise sure ... a temple pure –
The city bright and fair;
And its new name, from that blest day,
“JEHOVAH ... HE IS THERE.”

But, still, the silent centuries
Must intervene before
The presence of the living God
Bursts on the scene, once more.

Oh! Wonder of God's universe!
The virgin, pure, gives birth!

And lo! ... upon a manger's straw ...
The Lord of all the earth!

That holy Babe ... God manifest!
His name, Emanuel ...
The effulgence of the eternal God
Has come, with man to dwell!

The Son of God! ... Oh! Will He live
Within a palace, fair?
Will heralds loud His praise proclaim
As He goes everywhere?

Will He, from royal coach, behold
Unending pageantry,
As the vast kingdom He surveys,
From sea to hinder sea?

Will thousands press to kiss His hand
And fall on bended knee,
And gather up each precious word
Enthusiastically?

Ah ... no! The sinful heart of man
Will not, with blinded eyes,
Behold the glories of this One ...
He comes in servant's guise!

And only those the Father gives
In grace, His love to share,
Will see beyond that veil of flesh,
To Who it is that's there.

To tell the fulness of that life,
My pen could ne'er attain;
For all the books in all the world
Could not the wealth contain!

.... / P.T.O.

But, this we know, that, through it all,
He shared His Father's love,
Then gave His life that we might share
With Him, His home above ...

A home prepared with His own hands,
Where all bespeaks His grace,
With every soul exulting in
The shining of His face ...

Each longing stilled ... each hope fulfilled,
In bonds that naught will sever ...
God's wondrous plan, to dwell with man,
Secured ... at last ... forever.

John Bufton Parker

NOTE

The Editor trusts that the selection and composition of material for this magazine has been undertaken with the Lord's guidance and that the contents are of moral and spiritual value and appropriate to present needs. The only infallible statement of truth, however, is found in the Holy Bible and the reader is, therefore, urged to follow the practice of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Editor is always happy to receive comments and inquiries, and to consider suggested articles for inclusion in future issues.