

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 109: January – April 2020 CONTENTS

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19 and Jeremiah 33:6)

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Editorial

This editorial is being written when the world is pre-occupied with Covid-19, or coronavirus, and its effects on health, economics and society. Indeed, it seems that it is making an impact on every aspect of life, including the family. Who cannot but feel sad when we hear of elderly people, and even children, dying alone because their loved ones are denied access to them? Then there is the impact on Christian fellowship while our gathering together is prevented.

On the other hand, much goodwill and self-sacrifice are also being demonstrated; we thank God for these things, and for the evident desire of Christians to keep in touch with one another by whatever means and so to encourage each other. We can also thank God for everything that casts us more on Him, as we realise our own frailty and insufficiency. There is a blessing too to be found in using in quiet meditation and prayer time that would otherwise be consumed in the hurly-burly of life. Perhaps at the level, too, of the ordinary and mundane, many of us may need to catch up with things with which have got behind over recent months and years!

We should bear in mind the scriptural injunctions to be subject to, and to pray for, the authorities as they struggle to deal with this extraordinary situation; Romans 13:1; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:13-17. They “are ordained of God,” although the time is approaching when they will become the vehicles of Satan’s activities. It seems that many have been worshipping at the shrine of globalisation but the downside of this is that financial, health and

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

other problems spread more easily and quickly from one country to another. Indeed, the frequent calls for world-wide collaboration on many aspects of life will surely play into Satan's hands in bringing nations together under the control of the beast (Revelation 13:1) and other powers such as the kings of the north and south. "But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah" (Micah 4:12). God is working on another plan, which will overpower Satan's, namely "to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth" (Ephesians 1:10). Let us be restful in this assurance.

Other reflections on the present troubles will be found in the article commencing on page 16. G.S.B.

THE MINISTRY AND RENEWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

2 Corinthians 3:8; Ephesians 5:18.

WHAT I have before me is, to say a little about the ministry of the Spirit. It is one of the great facts of Christianity that when the Lord had accomplished the work of redemption and ascended on high, He sent down the Holy Spirit, to dwell in us and to connect our hearts with Himself in the place where He is. The Spirit thus ministered to believers becomes in us the power of life, and the power for testimony. That state *in us*, which properly corresponds to our standing in Christ, is formed by the Spirit through the truth. It is the power that worketh *in us*, (*see Ephesians 3:20*) which makes good to, and in, us that which is true of us in Christ. Apart from this renewing of the Holy Spirit there is not proper Christian state, and consequently no proper Christian practice, for Christian practice must flow from a proper Christian state.

In 1 Corinthians 2 we get two things connected with the Spirit: first, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, He has revealed by the Spirit; and secondly, He has given the Spirit that we might know them; they are spiritually

discerned. The mere understanding of truth does not give power; it is only operative as it is made good in us by the Spirit. We have a great amount of truth in knowledge; how is it there is such a feeble condition, and why is our practice so unworthy of what we have in knowledge? Because it has not been made good in us by the Holy Ghost. Everything is ours in Christ (Eph. 1:3); this ever remains unchangeably true, independent of anything in us, but the question is how far in our own individual faith we have reached these things to know and enjoy and live in them. The truth remains for ever the same, but it is only as in faith and by the Spirit we make it our own, so as to rejoice in Christ, that it becomes operative in us.

I will now turn to some scriptures to see how the truth is made good to us and in us by the Spirit. Romans 5:5: “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.” God has not only manifested His love and commended it to us in the gift of His Son, and revealed it in His word, He has also given us the Holy Spirit to shed it abroad *in our hearts*. When the truth gets there it becomes operative in us. I never doubt God’s love; the blessed fact that He loves me remains unalterably true in spite of everything; but I may not always be walking in the *enjoyment* of it. This is maintained by the present ministry of the Spirit and depends upon my walking in the Spirit. We cannot separate the enjoyment of the truth from our practical walk.

Romans 8:9-13. Here we see how we *realise* that deliverance which has been secured for us by the death of Christ; it is by the Spirit. The ground of it we get in chapter 6. We are entitled to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin because Christ has died to sin when our old man was crucified with Him. But is this deliverance a practical thing with us? The mere knowledge of the doctrine of chapter 6 does not give me practical deliverance from sin, though it shows me the ground on which this deliverance has been secured for me. It is by the Spirit’s

indwelling and power that I realise as a practical thing this deliverance: “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Numbers of saints do not know this deliverance, because they do not see that it is by the Spirit. As we read in Galatians 5, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” By the Spirit alone can we realise this deliverance made ours in the death of Christ. It is not by fighting against my flesh I get victory over it. The conflict is between the flesh and the Spirit, and if we walk in the Spirit we do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

Now as to sonship the same thing is true: it is known and enjoyed by the Spirit. See Romans: 8:14, 15; Galatians 3:26; 4:6. “For many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.” Verse 16: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” “Ye are all the children (*sons*) of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” “As many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God” (John 1:12). “Now are we the children of God” (1 John 3:2). This is an unchangeable relationship. But the grace which has made it absolutely ours has also given us the Spirit of the Son in our hearts that we may know and enjoy it. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father.” It is not merely that I know that God is my Father, but by the Spirit I get the feelings, the joys, the communion, suited to that relationship. It is by the Spirit we cry, “Abba, Father.” It is not effort but walking in the Spirit; I am led by the Spirit into the enjoyment of the relationship. But nothing can touch the relationship. If I grieve the Spirit I lose the joy directly, because it is by the Spirit I enjoy it.

Romans 15:13: “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.”

Having set the doctrine of the gospel before them, the apostle desired there should be in them a subjective condition corresponding with the gospel, and when he thinks of this, he says, “through the power of the Holy Ghost.” The mere knowledge of the gospel will not produce such a state; it is the fruit of the ungrieved power and ministry of the Spirit, and so intimately associated with our walk. If by careless or worldly walk we grieve the Holy Ghost, our spiritual condition cannot correspond with the gospel we have received; this explains the lack of joy and peace and abounding hope so often found with us.

Ephesians 3:14: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The apostle had set before them the greatness of the calling, and then he falls on his knees and cries to God about these saints, praying that they might be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, so that their actual state might correspond with their calling, according to the power that worketh *in us*. The more we see the greatness of the calling the more it casts us on our knees in prayer to God that we might be in correspondence with the calling, so that it may not be merely something in our minds producing no real joy or practical effect, but the source of joy and power in our souls. On the one hand we see how the sovereignty of God has given us everything and secured all to us in Christ, and on the other hand we see how the Spirit through the truth makes them good to us and in us; there are these two things. Nothing short of divine power can lead us into the apprehension and enjoyment of divine things, because these things are entirely outside the thoughts and capacity of the natural man. It is one thing to have the truth clearly in our minds; it is another thing to have it inwrought in our souls by the Holy Spirit, so as to form and characterise our lives, Christ being thus formed in us by the

truth. The Spirit never makes Himself our object nor His work in us, but ever seeks to occupy us with Christ, so that a man filled with the Spirit looks up into heaven and sees Jesus, and beholding the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image as *by the Lord the Spirit*. Christ is the object, but the Spirit is the power by which we can be truly occupied with such an object, and thereby become transformed into His image. Moreover, if Christ is the object of my affections, my heart follows Him to where He is, and His place becomes my place, and this morally separates me from the place where He is not. What I desire to point out is the place the Spirit has in connection with our apprehension and enjoyment of the truth. Ephesians 4:30: if so much for us depends on the Spirit, is it any wonder the apostle says “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”?

What we have been looking at shows how the enjoyment of the truth and its power in us are inseparably connected with our actual state. It is impossible to be going on with the world and be in the enjoyment of heavenly things. It should make us careful to walk in God’s fear, in lowliness and dependence, watching against all that excites the flesh and grieves the Spirit. According to the admonition in the verse we read, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Message given by Dr. Frank H. Bodman during meetings at Quemerford, Wiltshire, in May, 1890.

Fragment

Deuteronomy 33:12

Kept safe by the Lord Jehovah,
For He has thee on His heart,
His faithfulness will not fail you,
Nor His kindness from thee depart.

Ruth Thomas.

DISPUTES ABOUT QUESTIONS

(See 2 Timothy 2:14)

Now it seems to me that you and I would do well to take a leaf out of John's (*i.e. John the Baptist's*) book as regards all this (*John's Gospel, chs. 1 & 3*). I need not remind you that in this our day there are questions agitating men's minds. Yes, and some of us are called to account for not expressing ourselves more decidedly on some at least of these questions. But, for my part, I believe the devil is doing his utmost to alienate our hearts from Christ and from one another by questions. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. He does not come openly, and say, "I am the devil, and I want to divide and scatter you by questions." Yet this is precisely what he is seeking to do.

Now, it matters not whether the question be right or wrong in itself; the devil can make use of a right question just as effectively as of a wrong one, provided he can succeed in raising that question into undue prominence and causing it to come between our souls Christ, and between us and our brethren. I can understand a difference in judgment, on various minor questions. Christians have differed about such for many long centuries, and they will continue to differ until the end of time. It is human weakness. But when any question is allowed to assume undue prominence, it ceases to be mere human weakness, and becomes a wile of Satan. I may have a very decided judgment on any given point, and so may you. But what I long for now is a thorough sinking of all questions and a rejoicing together in hearing the Bridegroom's voice, and going on together in the light of His blessed countenance. This will confound the enemy. It will effectually deliver us from prejudice and partiality, from cliques and coteries. We shall then measure one another, not by our views of any particular question, but by our appreciation of the Person of Christ, and our devotion to His cause.

In a word, what I long for is that you and I, and all our dear brethren throughout whole world, may be characterized by a deep-toned, thorough, devotion to the name, and truth, and cause of Christ. I long to cultivate broad sympathies, that can take in every true lover of Christ, even though we see not eye to eye on all minor questions. At best “we know but in part”; and we can never expect people to agree with us about questions. But if Christ be our one absorbing object, all other things will assume their right place, their relative value, their proper proportions. “Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect [as many as have Christ for their one object], be thus minded: and if *in anything* ye be otherwise [or differently] minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. *Nevertheless*, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by *the same rule* [Christ], and mind the same thing” (Christ). The moment anything else but Christ is introduced as a rule to walk by, it is simply the work of the devil. Of this I am as sure as that I hold this pen in my hand.

May the Lord keep us all close to Himself, walking together, not in sectarianism, but in true brotherly love, seeking the blessing and prosperity of all who belong to Christ, and promoting in every possible way His blessed cause, until He come!

Extracted from “John the Baptist – ‘Only a Voice:’ Questions and How to meet Them” by C.H. Mackintosh (1820-96).

Editor’s Note: *It should be borne in mind that the author’s concern was about minor questions that should not interfere with Christian fellowship. In other articles he was very clear about the need to depart from evil and to exercise assembly discipline where necessary.*

Fragment

The moment you break bread you are committed to these two things: that nothing shall be there which will not suit the Lord; and that there is room there (it is not the Lord’s table otherwise) for every one of His own over the whole earth. *J.B. Stoney Vol. 1, p. 58.*

LIVING IN THE EXPECTATION OF OUR LORD'S RETURN

The next two articles have been selected to remind us of the importance of living in the expectation of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Extract from “Christ our Hope” by Edward Dennett (1831-1914)

The parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25) shows that, whatever our profession, we are not prepared to meet the Lord unless we have “oil” in our vessels; and the effect of the cry, “Behold, the bridegroom,” was to awaken both the wise and foolish as to their condition and needs. But everyone will understand that none but those who are born again through the Word and by the power of the Holy Ghost can be ready for the Lord’s coming. There was a second thing. The cry was, “**Go ye out** to meet Him.” With this corresponds another scripture. The Apostle John, after revealing to us that when Christ is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, adds, “Every man that hath this hope in Him [in Christ] purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (1 John 3:2, 3.) The effect of the expectation of Christ therefore, when held in living power, will be to separate, and to produce in us an ever increasing separation. With Himself before our souls, and looking for Him hourly, our desire will be to be apart from all which would not please His eyes, and to be possessed of all that would delight His gaze. Hence we may measure the reality and intensity of our hope by its separating power upon our hearts and lives. How were it possible indeed to cleave to a single thing, however innocent even in itself, if it be not distinctly for Christ, if we were expecting every moment to *see* His face? No; waiting for Him, our aim would be to be found just as He would have us to be, so that, weaned from every earthly thing and object that might bind our heart to the scene through which we are passing, we may have nothing to leave but the wilderness itself,

when He descends from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

It will also help us to keep our lamps trimmed and burning. All the ten virgins had fallen asleep; and when roused from their unfaithful slumbers, their first anxiety was for their lamps. “Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps” (v. 7). They had been careless about this before, but immediately they hear the cry, “Go ye out to meet him,” they turn to see if their lamps can be prepared in time to meet him. But they should have been kept both trimmed and burning all through the darkness of the night; and had they really been waiting for the bridegroom, it could not have been otherwise. How is it now with us who profess to be expecting the Lord? Are our lights burning – burning steadily and brightly through the surrounding darkness? The light is Christ. Are we then reflecting Him? “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matt. 5:14, 15). In like manner, if by the grace of God Christ is in us, it is that He may be displayed. “Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts *for the shining forth* of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6; Darby Translation).

The Apostle Paul applies this truth in many ways. “The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing,” etc. (Phil. 4:5, 6). He would thus have us without a single care in the prospect of His coming. He uses the same truth to comfort the hearts of the sorrowing in the passage already adduced (1 Thess. 4). And what can comfort the heart of the bereaved like the expectation of Christ? For even while the bodies of our dear ones are lying in the house, or on their way to the grave, we are entitled to hope that the Lord may return; and then, raised from their sleep of death, and we ourselves changed, we 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.

The Apostle James exhorts to patience on the same ground. “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (Jas. 5:7, 8). The prospect of the Lord’s return is thus an antidote to the weariness, the trials, and the difficulties of our wilderness journey.

The Lord Himself continually uses the uncertainty of the time of His return as an incentive to fidelity. When He represents Himself in the parable as departing to receive a kingdom and to return, and delivers the “pounds” to the servants, His word is, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:12, 13). Again, He says, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods” (Matt. 24:45-47).

These are but samples of the practical uses of the truth of the coming of Christ for His people. An examination of all the passages that treat of the subject will show that it is interwoven with every detail of Christian life and walk. To ignore it therefore is to lose one of the most powerful motives to holiness which is given to us in the Scriptures. More than this: it is, as before remarked, an integral part of Christianity; and hence the Christian who has not received the truth of the Lord’s coming is ignorant of the character of the place into which he is brought, as well as of the fulness of the grace of God. Is the coming of Christ – Christ Himself in His coming – your hope, dear reader? Can any prospect be so fraught with joy to the believer? To see the face of Him whom not having seen we love! To be like Him, and to be with Him forever! Surely if our hearts respond in ever so feeble a measure to what He is to us, and to His love, we must long for the moment when He will enter upon the fruition of His own joy in receiving His own to Himself, and when

our joy will be consummated in the everlasting possession of the Object of our affections.

May the Lord bring many more of His beloved saints into acquaintance with it, and enable those who by His grace do wait for Him to maintain the truth in living power – walking under its full separating influences every step of their wilderness path!

2. Extract from the introduction to “The Church’s Present Hope,” being lectures delivered by J.N. Darby in Geneva in 1840. (Read 2 Peter 1.)

THE Christian should seek to know not only the salvation that is in Christ, but also all the fruits of that salvation. He ought not only to be assured that he is in the house of His Father, but moreover to enjoy the privileges of his happy position. God “called us by (or, by His own) glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

In the glory of Christ and of the church God gives us a futurity filled with His counsels. The study of that precious truth engages our thoughts in the most useful way; and certainly it is one of the objects He has proposed to Himself in dispensing to us prophecy, which reveals His intentions, and makes us, as friends, to share the thoughts which occupy Him. He could not give us a more tender pledge of His love and of His confidence (Genesis 18:17), nor anything having a more sanctifying influence upon our souls.

In fact, if men are characterised by the object they pursue, our conduct in the present will be formed by the future of our hope – it will necessarily have its reflection and colour. Those who think after dignities only; those who dream not save of riches; those who do not expect happiness but from the pleasures of the world, act each according to what is in his heart – their life respectively is ruled by the object of their affections. It is the same with the church. If the faithful understood their calling, which is to participate in a future all-heavenly glory, what would be the effect? That they would live here below as strangers and pilgrims. By a knowledge of the

prophecies that concern the earth, they would understand better the nature of the terrestrial promises made to the Jews; they would distinguish them from those that concern us Gentiles; they would judge the spirit of the age and be emancipated from human prepossessions, and from anxieties, always baleful to the Christian life; they would learn to lean upon Him, Who has regulated all, Who knows the end of things from the beginning, and be wholly devoted to the hope which has been given them, and to the observance of the duties which flow from it.

It is pretended that the true use of the prophecies is to prove the divinity of the Bible by what is already accomplished. It is, indeed, one use which may be made; but it is not the special aim for which they have been delivered. They are given, not to the world, but to the church, with the view of communicating to it the thoughts of God, and of serving as a guide and torch before the arrival of the events that they announce, and during the course of these events. What should one say of a man who employed all the confidence of a tender friend only to convince himself at length that he spoke the truth? Alas! where are we? Have we so far lost the feeling of our privileges and of God's goodness? Is there nothing for the church in all these holy revelations? for surely, the church is not to question whether God, its heavenly Friend, has spoken the truth!

But more; the greater part of the prophecies, and, in a certain sense, one can say all the prophecies, will be accomplished at the termination of the economy that concerns us. Now at that epoch it will be too late to be convinced of their truth, or to employ them to the conviction of others. The terrible judgment which will fall upon those who doubt them, will be their too evident demonstration. I single out one instance of this in the predictions of our Lord. What was the value of His warning to the disciples to flee in such and such circumstances, if they had not understood what He said nor believed beforehand the truth of His word? It was precisely this knowledge and faith which distinguished them from all their unbelieving

fellow-countrymen. Thus it is with the church. The judgments of God are to strike the nations. The church is warned of them, and (thanks to the teaching of the Holy Ghost) believes, understands, and escapes the woes which are coming.

But the objection is, that they are purely speculative notions. Oh! wile of Satan: if, rising above the present – above the feeling of selfish need and momentary circumstances – if, emancipated from the domain of material beings, I launch into the future, into the field given up to human intelligence, all there will be uncertain and uninfluential, or I shall fill it, either with my thoughts, or with the thoughts of God. *My* thoughts are just speculation: whereas it is prophecy which unfolds and develops the thoughts *of God*; for prophecy is the revelation of *His* thoughts and counsels as to the future. What Christian does not rejoice in the prospect that “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea?” Well, it is a prophecy. Do we ask, how will it be accomplished? It is not from man’s mouth that the answer should come forth: the same prophecy instructs us here also, and silences the imaginations and the vain glory of our haughty hearts.

In fact, while communion with God comforts and sanctifies us, while that communion which is to last for ever is already given us, God has been pleased to act on our hearts by positive hopes, and therefore He must needs communicate them to us, in order that they should be influential, and that our faith should be neither vague nor filled with cunningly devised fables. The God of grace and goodness be praised! Neither is our case. “For,” says the apostle, when he would maintain in the souls of the faithful, piety, virtue, brotherly kindness, love, and would have them remember these things continually, “we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in

whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of private [its own] interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:16-21).

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:28).

The word *unprecedented* is punctuating the statements of many politicians as the current coronavirus continues to spread its influence across the world. While it is true that there have been deadly plagues which claimed thousands of lives in past centuries, Covid-19 appears to surpass all others in terms of its effect. The virus has been officially classified as a *pandemic* because it has spread in multiple countries around the world at the same time. It is not the *only* recorded pandemic, but it would appear that it is going to be the most significant economically that the world has known. *Unprecedented* times have truly dawned upon us.

Each day fresh facts and figures are released, revealing the scale of the infection. We are informed of the number of new cases which have been identified as well as the number of deaths relating to the virus that have occurred in the previous 24 hours. Reports from across the world also confirm how the virus has spread in other countries. Predictions are being made as experts seek to determine how rapidly it will spread and when the peak of the infection will be reached.

Apart from the illness itself, millions of lives have been affected in numerous ways. International travel has become almost impossible, and non-essential local journeys are prohibited. Older citizens have been told to remain at home for the foreseeable future. Airlines globally have grounded most of their fleets, impacting business and leisure travel. The cost to the world's economy will be astronomical. Unemployment and inflation will rise while bank interest and shares fall. Governments are responding to the crisis by promising financial aid, but where will the necessary billions come from? Some have compared this pandemic to the Great Depression of the 1930s – but this is undoubtedly worse. Every country upon earth has been touched in some way or other.

The Christian believer seeking to understand the situation will, of course, turn to the Word of God for help. Does the Bible offer any explanation for the global spread of this deadly pandemic? Clearly, coronavirus is a *curse*, but we ought not to be surprised by its appearance on every continent. Nations have flouted God's decrees which are revealed in His holy Word. Marriage, a divine institution, is held in very low esteem today, and divorce can easily be obtained. Same-sex relationships are not simply condoned but are now *promoted*. Abortion, the destruction of human life, is increasing – with already some 200,000 being carried out annually in Britain alone, according to *The Christian Institute*. Should we expect God to remain unmoved by these wicked practices? Covid-19 may well be interpreted as a sign of His divine displeasure.

Scripture sheds further light upon current events when we listen to the words of the Lord Jesus in what is often called the Olivet Discourse. Looking into the future, He declared, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matt.24:7,8). These words are extremely up-do-date when we consider the international unrest, famines, the coronavirus, earthquakes – all of which feature

regularly in news bulletins. According to the Lord Jesus they are, collectively, “the beginning of sorrows.” However, He also pointed out “but the end is not yet” (Matt.24:6). A seven-year period of trouble lies ahead for this world, with the second half of that period being a time of great tribulation. It will be a more terrible time than this world has ever known. The events identified by the Lord Jesus are precursors of that tribulation.

The verse quoted at the beginning of this article offers hope to the children of God. “And when these things begin to come to pass ...” (Lk.21:28). What might “these things” be? Much of Luke 21 appears to relate to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD70, but the latter part of the Lord’s address clearly takes us on to a much later time. He spoke of “men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Lk.21:26). It cannot be denied that the hearts of many are filled with fear at the present time as they consider the repercussions of the coronavirus. Nobody knows how long it will continue. But the Lord Jesus told His disciples to “look up, and lift up [their] heads” when they observed certain signs, for those signs were indications that their “redemption” was drawing near. We who rejoice in the redemption found in Christ’s precious blood look for the fulfilment of redemption’s work. Paul wrote of “the redemption of our body” (Rom.8:23) which will take place at the coming of our Lord. The familiar words of 1 Thessalonians 4 assure us of the Rapture when the Lord Jesus will come from heaven to gather His people home. We await that moment which may be sooner than we think.

Critics and more cautious believers often take exception to such remarks as these. They will point out that throughout history there has been international unrest, as well as wars, earthquakes, and plagues. The coronavirus, they will tell us, is nothing new and we ought not to interpret it as a sign that the Lord’s coming is near.

The fact remains that the Lord Jesus has promised to come again, and one generation will be alive at the moment of His return.

Is it right to dismiss the fact that *we* might be living at such a time? Although events associated with “the beginning of sorrows” may have been witnessed for centuries, so many *more* signs have appeared before us in recent times. We ought to consider them carefully.

Since 1948 Israel, as a nation, has been established in its land once again. There is clear evidence that we are living in *the days of Noah* as well as in *the days of Lot* – the former characterized by violence and corruption and the latter by same-sex relationships. The Lord Jesus linked these features with conditions upon earth at His return in Luke 17:26-30. Events among the nations of Europe point to what has been prophesied in the books of Daniel and Revelation. In addition to this, we have witnessed an explosion of knowledge and world-wide travel – perhaps in fulfilment of Daniel 12:4. The coronavirus pandemic is yet another sign to consider, creating problems beyond the ability of any man to resolve. Fear has been spread, and the economic repercussions are likely to remain for many years. Finally, man has now usurped the position of God in attempting to control life, decide upon a chosen gender, and determine who may live or who should die.

It would be foolish indeed to ignore all these signs. The Lord Jesus has told us that when these things *begin to come to pass* we should lift up our heads for our redemption draweth nigh. Living more than two thousand years since His first advent, we are nearer to our Lord’s return than any previous generation has been. However, while we have referred to things happening in the world around that point to the imminence of the Lord’s return, no particular sign has been given in Scripture to precede the Rapture of the saints. We could hear the assembling shout at any time! Truly, “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8).

At the close of his hymn *The night is now far spent*, Thomas Kelly encourages us by saying, “With such a hope let us rejoice, we soon shall hear the Saviour’s voice.” (*See p.27.*) We long to hear

that voice and to see His face. At such an hour as this, in the words of 2 Peter 3:14 let us be diligent that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless, at His coming. *Martin Girard*

REMARKS ON WORSHIP

In the light of the different modes of worship that have lately developed in Christendom it may be timely to consider what true worship is.

Meaning of Words. I am not a Greek scholar but it is well known that two principal words are used in the New Testament for worship: *latreuō* and *proskuneo*. The former is also used for service, as, for example, in Romans 1:9 [“For God is my witness, whom I serve with (*or in*) my spirit in the gospel of His Son”] or 2 Timothy 1:3 [“I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience”]. The idea has therefore been put around that worship and service (of any sort) are synonymous. I even heard one brother in Christ say that mowing the lawn is worship!

In many more places, however, it is the word *proskuneo* that is used, which carries more the idea of homage or obeisance. One example of its use is in John 4:23: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” It is with worship in this sense that this article is concerned.

Worship and Ministry. A respected servant of the Lord was publicly criticising (rightly, in my view) certain modern forms of ‘worship,’ but he went on to say, “Now we shall have some true worship” and thereupon opened the Bible to give ministry (i.e. teaching) to the congregation. We certainly are in great need of sound teaching (see 2 Timothy 4:3) but surely ministry of this sort is *from God to man* whereas worship, as in John 4, is *from man to God!* No doubt, however, good teaching should promote a spirit of worship with us. So we have the result of Aaron repeating to the afflicted Israelites in Egypt the words that God had spoken to

Moses: “And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped” (Exodus 4:31). Often a brief message from the Bible in the course of a meeting for worship (as when we gather to remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread) will stimulate praise and worship but a session of teaching is another matter. J.N. Darby (1800-82) wrote:

“The *worship* of God is not ministry; it is the expression of the heart of the children before their Father in heaven, and of priests before their God (*note: all believers are priests – see 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10*); in the intimacy of the presence of Him who, in His love, has rent the veil, which His justice had opposed to the sinner; and has rent it by a stroke which has disarmed justice, and left her nothing but the happy task of clothing with the best robe those to whom before all entrance had been denied” (*Collected Writings Vol. 1 [N.S.] page 208*).

In another article (“*On Worship*,” *C.W. Vol. 7 pp. 87-9*). he wrote: “What, then. Is worship? It is the honour and adoration which are rendered to God, by reason of what He is in Himself, and what He is for those who render it. ... No work of God towards man is worship; nor any testimony respecting Him and His grace. Preaching the gospel to the unconverted is not worship. It may produce it, as the means of communicating that knowledge of God in grace which awakens the spirit of adoration in the heart; but the preaching itself, properly speaking (how blessed so ever it may be), is not worship. The gospel is a testimony rendered on God’s part to man. Not recognising it as worship does not derogate from the value of such preaching; without it, no Christian worship could exist, for the gospel makes known the God who ought to be adored, and through the power of the Spirit, it leads the soul into the state in which it is able to render true homage to God, even that worship which is in Spirit and in truth But it is not,

therefore, the less true that no sort of testimony addressed to man from God is worship rendered to God by man. A sermon is not worship; though it may be the means of producing it. ... Prayers addressed to God, in order to obtain that of which we stand in need, are not worship, properly so called.”

Worship Leaders. We recently received information addressed to “The Worship Leader” for our hall. It seems that this is someone who leads the congregational singing and instrumental accompaniment. But what says the Scripture? The only leader of worship of whom I read in the New Testament is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: “For both He that sanctifies and those sanctified (*note, not ‘are being sanctified’*) are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing Thy praises” (Hebrews 2:11,12; see also Psalm 22:22).

Some may point to passages in the Old Testament and the appointment of men such as “the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries (*or, lutes*), and with cymbals” (1 Chronicles 25:1) but, as the Epistle to the Hebrews shows, the old system of worship has been superseded by what has since been inaugurated through Christ. In *those* days God had given a religion to man as in the flesh, suited to the five senses, but *now* believers are “in Christ” and “old things are passed away” (2 Corinthians 5:17). *Then* God dwelt beyond the veil in darkness and the people were kept at a distance; *now* we are reconciled to Him, brought near, taken into His favour, and we are to “worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” Now Christ alone is the “minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:2).

Worship by the Spirit. Before we knew Christ as Saviour we were “in the flesh” (Romans 7:5). Now, however, in virtue of His great work of redemption and His ascension into glory, believers in Him have received the Holy Spirit (John 7:39) and are no longer in flesh,

but in Spirit (Romans 8:9). It is only thus that we can rightly worship God; only by the Spirit can we cry, “Abba, Father” (v. 15). So Paul says, “For *we* are the circumcision, who worship God by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh” (Philippians 3:3). The flesh has been cut off in the cross of Christ (see Colossians 2:11) and can have no place in God’s presence. We see a figure of this in the system of worship inaugurated through Moses, in which the priests had to wear linen trousers when going into the holy place (Exodus 28:42, 43). In connection with the instruction in Deuteronomy 22:11 not to wear that “a garment of mixed material, woven of wool and linen together,” C.A. Coates (1862-1945) makes an interesting reference in his *Outline of Deuteronomy* to Ezekiel 44:17, 18 and says:

“The warmth of nature has its proper sphere in natural affections, and the like, but it is not to be ‘mixed’ with that which in its character should be wholly spiritual. The priestly garments being of linen suggests a character of deportment that is free from elements which take their rise in the warmth of mere nature, and which would excite, or minister to, what is fleshly or merely of nature. How necessary it is to see that there is no mixture in regard to how we are clothed for service! The natural characteristics of the vessel remain, but they are all to be subordinated to what is spiritual. Almost the last word of the risen Lord was, ‘And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but do ye remain in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high’ (Luke: 24:49). It is right to be fervent; the more fervent a man is in his spirit the better, but it is to be spiritual fervour, and not merely the warmth or eloquence that may be natural to the man. The ‘wool’ and ‘linen’ each have their place, but they are not to be mixed. All service should have a purely spiritual character. The ‘linen’ suggests the fine texture of what is spiritual, a character of things which does not minister to what is natural, either in the one who speaks or in those to whom he speaks.”

It would be a mistake to equate spiritual worship with being mature in years or growth in Christ; a young believer indwelt by God's Spirit can certainly participate in it – indeed, he may well speak with a freshness that may sadly be lacking in those who are older. To be able to worship rightly, however, I must know that I am redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (Revelation 5:9, 10) and am indwelt by the blessed Holy Spirit, who unites me (and all the sanctified) to Him who leads the praises of His own (Heb. 2:11). This surely makes the display to all and sundry of banners in front of churches such as 'Come and Worship with us' inappropriate – although those yet outside of Christ may well be helped by *witnessing* Christian worship.

Satisfaction and Worship. I believe true worship flows out of a heart that is satisfied in Christ. Do we not learn this lesson from the woman whom the Lord met at the well of Sychar (John 4)? She had evidently been a dissatisfied woman, having had five husbands and now living with another man. Her history, however, had been exposed by the Revealer of Secrets and she had drunk of the living water that He offered, so she went away into the city full of Him, leaving her water pot, emblematic of the source on which she had previously relied. Is it not significant that it was in His conversation with this woman that the Lord Jesus spoke of worship of the Father in spirit and truth? J.B. Stoney (1814-97), in reference to the Queen of Sheba in the presence of Solomon, said

“It was not merely that she was absorbed, but so sensible of the bliss she was in, that she breaks forth in acknowledgments; ... If you are really beside yourself, and find that you do not want anything, your cup is full and running over; you cannot contain yourself, you must worship. Worship is the outflow of a full cup” (New Series, Volume 1, page 213).

The psalmist said, “My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I say what I have composed touching the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer” (Psa. 45:1).

Spontaneity in Worship. It follows that true worship arises spontaneously in a heart moved by a fresh appreciation of who and what God is and of the One in Whom He is revealed to us, our Lord Jesus Christ. In His nature, “God is love” (1 John 4:8 and 16) but He has many attributes, such as righteousness, holiness, mercy, grace etc., all of these being perfectly blended together in the display of His glory, the cross having shown that “loving-kindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalm 85:10). Surely it would be a hard heart that, in the face of these wonderful things, doesn’t rise spontaneously in worship! But for this we must have *life*, spiritual life. This the Lord Jesus came to bring us (John 10:10); we have it by faith in Him (John 20:31) and enjoy it through the indwelling Spirit of God (Romans 8:2 and 10). C.A. Coates wrote, “outward correctness can be imitated, but the spontaneity of life cannot” (Outline of Deuteronomy, page 291).

That does not mean, however, that we should come to a meeting for remembrance and worship empty. Under the old regime God said “None shall appear before Me empty” (Exodus 23:15). Surely, as we walk with the Lord, read the Scriptures and pray, we should all be daily gathering impressions of Christ and of the God revealed in Him, on which the Holy Spirit can draw as He pleases.

But a consideration of God’s *ways*, too, should cause us to worship Him, as it did with the apostle Paul, who exclaimed (Romans 11:33-36): “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen”

The Sequel to Worship. If I have, through Christ and in the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18), enjoyed access to the Father and been engaged in worshipping Him, it must have an effect on my ways,

my work and my witness. In a dry and thirsty land, the psalmist longed for God, whose power and glory he had seen in the sanctuary (Psalm 63:2). Isaiah “saw His glory and spoke of Him” (Isa. 6 and John 12:41). May our experience of true worship sanctify and empower us in every aspect of our lives! *The Editor.*

“AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALL”

Acts 2:39.

There are three things the Christian is called to. He is called out of this world to God (Philippians 3:14; 1 Peter 2:9); He is called to share an inheritance with Christ (1 Peter 3:9 and 1:4); he is called to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 1:9).

The first takes me out of the world. The second leads my heart into joys which lift me up beyond the region of things here. The third leads me into divine fellowship practically. The man who is heavenly is a contrast to the world, and is a true witness, that is, a witness to the death of Christ, and thus a witness against the world.

The man who has all his prospects in the inheritance to which he is heir, as joint heir with Christ, wants nothing here.

The man who *“follows”* is, firstly, close to the Master. Secondly, he is subject to Him. Thirdly, he tastes the sorrows and joys of the path.

The path of true service and testimony is an exact reflex of His path when here, hence it is a downward one. All vain-glory must be set aside. All the principles advocated in the world and valued by men must be disused. The world seeks its own, and all man’s principles are for self-aggrandisement, while the Christian’s is self-abasement. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” The saint never goes down but he goes up at the same time. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” “Even as Christ pleased not Himself.” The throne of glory is the answer to the cross. It is in the

path of testimony that the Lord's company is known. Firstly, His love; secondly, His joy; thirdly, His support. I get the first two in bearing fruit (John 15:10, 11). The third is made manifest to me as I feel what He felt in relation to things here – sin, and the animosity of the world to the truth. We have His gracious words, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

The Lord lead us more to be associated with Christ practically here, for the more we know our place there in Him on high, the more I believe we shall value that path of separation and holiness in which His divine love is tasted, and His sympathies known. A.W.

From "A Voice to the Faithful," Volume XXVII (1893).

POETIC PAGES

Firstly, the hymn by Thomas Kelly (1769-1855) referred to on p. 19:-

The night is now far spent,
The day is drawing nigh;
Soon will the morning break
In radiance through the sky.
O let the thought our spirits cheer:
The Lord Himself will soon appear.

Though men our hope deride,
Nor will the truth believe,
We in His word confide,
And it will ne'er deceive.
Soon all that grieves shall pass away
And saints shall see a glorious day.

For us the Lord intends
A bright abode on high,
The place where sorrow ends
And nought is known but joy:
With such a hope let us rejoice;
We soon shall hear the Saviour's voice.

The following three poems will be familiar to many readers as adapted for collective singing and included in “Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Little Flock” since 1903, but I thought it would be of interest to present what I believe to be the original compositions – Editor.

“Thou Remainest”

On that eternal love of Thine,
My Lord and Saviour, I recline;
'Tis perfect rest on Thee to lean
Through all this changing, weary scene.

“Today,” as yesterday, THE SAME,
From everlasting is Thy Name;
The LORD, who earth’s foundations laid,
GOD’s Lamb, who full atonement made.

Yes! “THOU REMAINEST,” – whom have I
In heaven or earth, in sea or sky,
But THEE, with all Thy love revealed,
My Lord, Beloved, Friend and Shield.

Thy changeless favour rests on me,
And changeless is my place in THEE;
Fruit of that death of pain and woe,
Which THOU FOR me didst undergo.

LORD, on the throne THY love’s the same
As when upon the cross of shame;
Not only didst THOU come to die,
THOU livest still for us on high.

I see THEE there, the Lamb once slain,
How can a spot on me remain?
I see THEE crowned with glory now,
How can a shade rest on my brow?

The shadow dwelt on Calvary's tree,
And now Thine unveiled face I see;
These words my song of praise afford,
That "THOU REMAINEST, Blessed Lord!

Mrs. G. Helyar (1849-1913)

The Rapture of the Saints

These lines are supposed to be the utterance of the saints at the blessed moment when they are actually ascending to meet the Lord in the air, as described in 1 Cor. 15:51-57 and 1 Thess. 4:16-18.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

1 Cor. 15:55.

Hark to the trump! behold it breaks
The sleep of ages now:
And lo! the light of glory shines
On many an aching brow.

Changed in a moment – raised to life,
The quick, the dead arise,
Responsive to the angel's voice,
That calls us to the skies.

Ascending through the crowded air,
On eagles' wings we soar,
To dwell in the full joy of love,
And sorrow there no more.

Undazzled by the glorious light,
Of that beloved brow,
We see, without a single cloud,
We see the Saviour now!

O Lord, the bright and blessed hope
That cheer'd us through the past,
Of full eternal rest in Thee
Is all fulfill'd at last.

The cry of sorrow here is hush'd,
The voice of prayer is o'er; *
'Tis needless now – for, Lord, we crave
Thy gracious help no more.

Praise, endless praise, alone becomes
This bright and blessed place,
Where every eye beholds unveil'd
The mysteries of Thy grace.

Past conflict here, O Lord, 'tis ours,
Through everlasting days,
To sing our song of victory now,
And only live to praise.

* This thought was suggested by the blessed experience of John Janeway (1633? – 1657) on his death-bed, expressed in the following words: “I expect no more here, I cannot desire more, I cannot bear more. O praise, praise, praise that infinite boundless love that hath, to a wonder, looked upon my soul and done more for me than thousands of his dear children.” Again, “More praise still, O help me to praise him! *I have done with prayer*, and all other ordinances: I have almost done conversing with mortals. I shall presently be beholding Christ himself, that loved me, and died for me, and washed me in his blood.”

Sir Edward Denny (1796-1889)

“To God, Who Preserves All Things in Life”

(1 Timothy 6:13-16)

To Thee – alone
Dwelling in uncreated light –
Who hast unknown,
Immortal Being beyond sight –
Honour and everlasting might.

Yet though our eyes
May not behold Thy Deity
(So broadly lies
The gulf between all else and Thee).
We Thine unmeasured glories see!

By faith we see
Jesus with highest honour crowned;
And majesty
Divine and human, without bound,
Filling with joy all heaven around!

In Him revealed
Thy counsel, ere the world began;
Naught is concealed,
O God, of all Thy wondrous plan,
Divine perfection in a Man!

Soon shall the veil
That covers Him be drawn aside;
Suns shall grow pale
Before His splendour, beaming wide;
Nor any nook His glory hide!

Thy Potentate,
The Lord of lords and sov'reign King,
Shall reign in state,
All nations shall His virtue sing,
To Him their gifts and treasure bring!

To God – alone
Dwelling in uncreated light –
Who hast unknown,
Immortal Being beyond sight –
Honour and everlasting might!

E.L. Bevir (1847-1922)

Fragment

“The wave of temptation may even wash you higher up upon the Rock of ages, so that you cling to it with a firmer grip than you have ever done before, and so again where sin abounds, grace will much more abound.” *C.H. Spurgeon (1874).*

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.