

Words of

Peace

& Truth

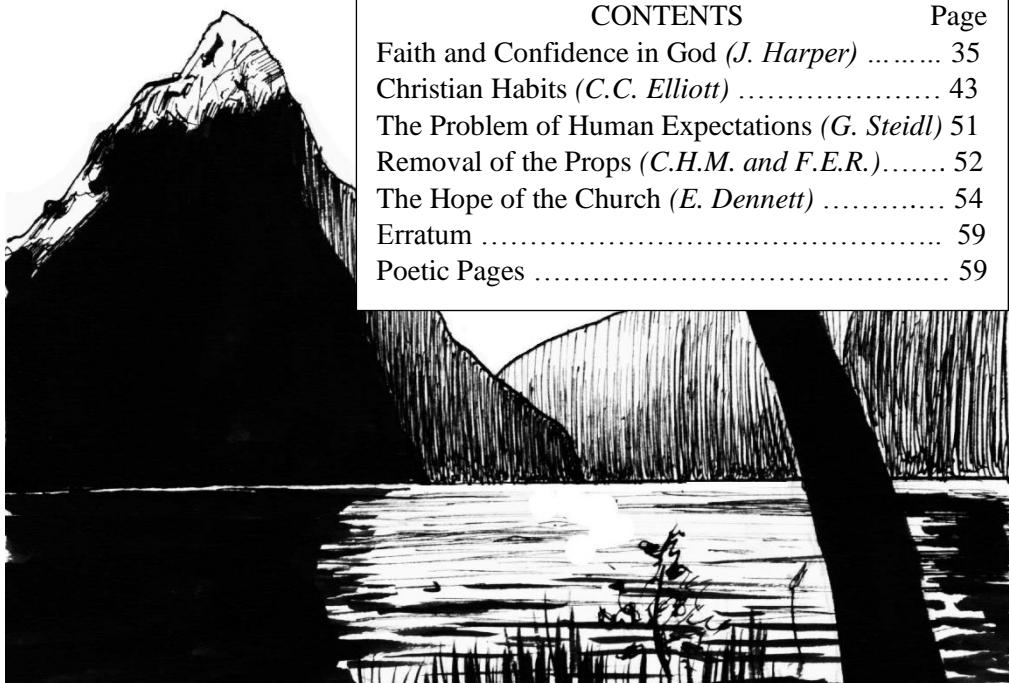


No. 113: May-August 2021

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

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

No. 113: May – August 2021

Editorial

This editorial is being written when here in the United Kingdom there has been considerable relaxation of the restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus but of course there is no certainty about what will happen next. How good it is, however, to turn to the Holy Scriptures and find certainty there – certainty about the fulfilment of all the purposes that God had in His heart from before the foundation of the world, as Ephesians chapter 1 reminds us, and certainty too about all God's promises to us, secure in the Lord Jesus, the Son of God: "in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, for glory to God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The article on the removal of the props (page 52), which appeared in WPT No. 62 (April-June 2006), is reproduced here with additional material in view of the days in which we are now living, marked by increasing rapidity of change, uncertainty on almost every front and the falling away of things on which we may have relied. God would use such developments to teach us not to put confidence in man but only in the Lord (Jeremiah 17:5-8). The little poem "God is Left Out" (page 59 – reprinted from WPT No. 71) reminds us of the cause of all the present troubles. People will turn to scientists, medics and others but rarely to God. Amos chapter 4 makes solemn reading in this connection.

But may we all be encouraged, "for the coming of the Lord is drawn nigh" (James 5:8) – what a wonderful prospect for all who have come to Him in repentance and faith. G.S.B.

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FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Acts 1:9; Job 37: 11-13; 1 Kings 18: 41-45

In reading these scriptures which speak of clouds, I have in mind that we should each and all be strengthened in our faith and in our confidence in God. The first scripture in Acts 1 speaks of the cloud which inaugurates the beginning of the faith dispensation; the second scripture, read from the book of Job, speaks of clouds as in the governmental and disciplinary ways of God with us; and thirdly in Kings we have the clouds expressive of the blessing of God as consequent upon the fervent prayer and faith of His servant Elijah.

Referring to the first scripture, it is a wonderful thing to be reminded that there were some who actually saw the Lord Jesus go up into heaven; those amongst whom He had walked and to whom He had spoken. He had been into death and risen and presented Himself living before them. What a wonderful thing it must have been to the disciples to gaze upon One living who had actually been through death and who now was going back to heaven. He had said to them in His ministry, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14). It was a test to them as to their faith. They believed in God whom they had not seen, and now Jesus was going away to prepare a place for them, and they were to believe in Him. So in this ninth verse of Acts 1 it says, “He was taken up, they beholding him, and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

I would like to encourage each one of our hearts in the fresh sense that “the Lord is near.” Paul in writing to the Philippians said, “The Lord is near.” He is out of sight, but He is just behind the cloud, beloved. “A cloud received him out of their sight.” May the faith of all our hearts be afresh stimulated to recognise and believe that He is near although out of sight. Everything that we enjoy, we enjoy on the principle of faith. We have not seen the Lord actually, but we have the testimony of those who have. “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, He was seen of

above five hundred brethren.at once, of whom the greater part remain” (1 Corinthians 15). This is ample evidence that He is alive and gone back to heaven. But *we* have not seen Him, as Peter says, “whom having not seen [we] love” (1 Peter 1:8) but He is just on the other side of the clouds, so to speak; He is near.

What we believe, then, we believe on the principle of faith. This is “God’s dispensation, which is in faith” (1 Timothy 1:4, Darby Translation). Ofttimes our faith is small and this is proved by the small measure of enjoyment of the things we say we believe. All that is presented to us on the principle of *faith* in the Epistle to the Romans – remission of sins, justification, peace with God, deliverance and salvation – can only be truly enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit. We know that they are embodied in the Person who is out of sight but living, and He is not far away but near. I feel that if we understood how near He is to us, we should have greater entrance, in spiritual enjoyment, into the vast realm that is presented to us on the principle of faith. God would have us all enjoy these things in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now a word on the scripture in Job. God’s disciplinary ways with His people are very searching, but He moves in infinite wisdom to bring us into the practical enjoyment of His holiness. The question is raised in Job, “Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?” (Job 37:16). I am afraid many of us will have to say that we do not understand the balancings of the clouds although we know they are balanced in perfect wisdom by God. Every cloud that comes upon us, whether individually or on companies of Christians, or the whole church of God universally; all the clouds are perfectly balanced. What is said is, that “with plentiful moisture He loadeth the thick clouds” (verse 11). “They are turned every way by His guidance, that they may do whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the circuit of the earth.” Some seem to think that in experience they have been tested more perhaps than others. Some of us perhaps think the load we have to take up is heavier than that of others, but the encouraging thing to

one's heart is that the clouds are perfectly balanced by God, and that they move by His guidance through the circuit of the earth. The Scripture says, "whether he cause it to come as a rod, or for his land, or in mercy" (verse 13). It helps us to see that God may have it in mind to direct the clouds for correction; this is what the rod means; or for the good and prosperity of His inheritance, this is for His land; or it may be in pure mercy. The psalmist says, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

In connection with the direction of the clouds as a rod, I would like all our hearts to be challenged as to the need of correction on account of our failure. Individually we have each to be corrected. David was a choice man. He had beautiful features that God took account of. He was a man of outstanding personal excellence and yet the element of pride showed itself one day when he sent forth Joab to number the people. You say, 'Well, there was not very much in that' but the truth of it was that there was the element of pride and God had to correct it.

Oh, how prone we are to make room for pride, and there is not any one of us that has anything to be proud of. If we have anything in connection with divine things, we have only got that which we have received. David sent to number the people, and God seeing beneath the surface saw the pride in his heart and in effect said to the prophet Gad, 'I am going to send the rod, the thick cloud, and David can choose whether he will have three years of famine, or three months to be chased before his enemies, or three days of pestilence.' But David would leave the matter entirely with God. and that is a very great thing, not to presume to choose how we would like to be disciplined, not to say whether we would like it to be long or short, but to leave it with God, for these thick clouds are turned by His guidance.

When that thick cloud came across David's path he saw seventy thousand of the people of God stricken, and it touched him

to the quick. Do we like to see others go down? David says to God: “It is I that have sinned and done evil; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand I pray thee, Jehovah my God, be on me” (1 Chronicles 21:17). Ah, his shepherd heart comes out beautifully at that time, and God says: “It is enough” (2 Samuel 24:16) and the thick cloud breaks in plentiful moisture. David’s heart shows itself, and in 1 Chronicles 22 the outcome of the plentiful moisture in that thick cloud eventuated in the threshing floor of Ornan. The house exceeding great in fame and in beauty comes before David’s mind; He provides abundantly for it. Where did he get all that substance? He got it as the outcome of his exercise as facing the black clouds that God had directed across his path. He says: “In my affliction I have prepared for the house of Jehovah a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight” (1 Chronicles 22:14). In his *affliction* he had provided that. He had been through things with God and had prospered. In 1 Chronicles 29 he says, “I have prepared according to all my *power* ... gold for things of gold, and silver for things of silver, and brass for things of brass ...” but he also says, “in my *affection* for the house of my God I have given of my own property of gold and of silver ... of the gold of Ophir and ... of refined silver.” “No chastening at the time seems to be matter of joy, but of grief; but afterwards yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it (Hebrews 12:11). Thus our personal spiritual property increases, and there is ultimately a yield for our God.

Now in the assembly of God at Corinth, there were those who were going on with sin. God could not tolerate that. God knows where there is evil in a place and He can direct the thick cloud. They are directed every way by His guidance throughout the circuit of the earth. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Corinthians 11:30). Yet that thick cloud had its plentiful moisture with it, and when there had been a cleansing by discipline, the plentiful moisture comes into evidence. In the second epistle we

have the rich ministry coming in – the ministry of the new covenant, reconciliation, and new creation, and a reminder of the unspeakable free gift of our God.

But then all discipline is not corrective. Job says, “or for his land.” I love that. Think of the beginning of the assembly’s history upon earth, as seen in Acts; the disciples of Christ were going on happily together, and if there is one thing that Satan does not like, it is to see the people of God going forward enjoying spiritual things together, the deep things of God. Satan is set for the destruction of conditions where such things can be enjoyed. Stephen was a man who was full of the Holy Spirit, enjoying the substance of what was in heaven to the full. He was persecuted to death, and it says, “On that day there arose a great persecution against the assembly” (Acts 8:1). It was the thick black cloud that many could not understand. Why should the saints of God be persecuted and fall under the hands of Saul of Tarsus? It was this man that God was after and also an increased yield from His people, and so we read in Acts 9:31 that “the assemblies … had peace, being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Ghost.” What a choice expression that is – “increased through the comfort of the Holy Ghost.”

We sometimes overlook the fact that there is a divine Person here upon earth, One Who, the Lord says, will abide with you for ever. He is the Comforter; and He takes the precious things of Christ and shows them to us. The thick clouds of persecution may be round about us; many are feeling it in a special way. Why is it? It is for His land. Many of us feel it when our brethren are moved from their places. Many are taken from their homes, too. You say, ‘Well, it is subjection to the authorities.’ Well, it is like that, but it is a scattering of God’s people. But this cloud is laden with plentiful moisture and God has in mind an increased fruitfulness from His land. Can we not see the early developments already? It was a terribly thick cloud when Herod had the apostle James’s head

cut off with the sword, a terribly thick cloud when Peter was taken and delivered to four quarternions of soldiers. But it was all in view of the comfort of the Holy Spirit coming in, and the Word of God **growing**. We read, “The word of God grew and spread itself” (Acts 12:24).

Then the cloud may be directed in **mercy**. There are many saints of God faced with thick clouds which they cannot understand. It may be they are on a bed of sickness, many others have lost a loved one. Are we prepared to leave it entirely with God? If we do, it will break with plentiful moisture, and help us in the knowledge of God, and what He is doing. Who can tell of the immensity of the value of the prayers of those who accept unquestionably these thick clouds? Think of the quality of the prayers that have gone up to God, and God has honoured them with plentiful moisture. The husbandman is never nearer the vine than when he is pruning it, but the end in view is more fruit, as one sufferer said: “When my pain is most severe, I taste the Father’s love.” Moreover, in all the upheavals that go on in the world, terrible warfare and the like [*this message was given in 1942 – Ed.*], there is going to be a yield to God from it. This thick black cloud is laden with plentiful moisture, and there will be an increase. If the thick cloud is directed by His guidance, let us exercise wisdom in our speech as to how long the trial will last; it rests with God, and He is procuring an increased yield from His inheritance in His people. Is it in mercy that God is thus detaching us from settling down here in a world that is marked by violence and corruption, and has cast out our Lord Jesus as worthless? Let us not be discouraged; there is the mercy of God in it.

And now we come to the last scripture, 1 Kings 18. The days were dark, apostasy bad set in amongst the people of God. Elijah thought he was the only one left, but God had seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It is said of one man that he cared

**This message was given during the Second World War – Editor.*

for a hundred of God's people and had hidden them in a cave and maintained them with bread and water. How many do we care for? Obadiah was a very inconspicuous man, and he had not made a great show but there was one commendable thing about Obadiah in that he cared for the people of God. Things were very dark indeed. Evil was current amongst the people of God. Is there one man who can approach God about this matter with right feeling? There are many difficulties among the people of God that are not solved, because there have not been the right feelings and fervency in prayer Godward. The apostle James tells us of the immense value of prayer. He says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). We have heard it oftentimes, but do we really believe it? Elijah was a man like we are and he prayed, and what happened? God shut the heavens. He prayed again, and what happened? God opened the heavens. Are we feeling things with God? Can we pray like Elijah? He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked, and said, 'There is nothing.'" Now Elijah did not give up because there was nothing. He said, "Go again seven times." This is the test for faith. He went seven times and he said the seventh time, "There is a cloud, small as a man's hand." Not very big for those who have had an exercise, those who have been fervent in prayer, those who have been waiting for a long time; but they are helped when they see this cloud the size of a man's hand. It is an indication that God is going to answer, and it is the size of a man's hand.

It is a most comforting thing to see the hand of the Lord in a matter, for everything He does is with feeling; the cloud is the size of a man's hand. He delights to help His own out of their difficulties. Sometimes we speak as though the Lord does not care for us, as the disciples on the lake, "Carest thou not?" Difficulties go on month after month, but when we see this cloud the size of a man's hand, we know that the Lord is coming in. That cloud soon develops into a thick black cloud, plentifully laden with moisture,

and what is the result? God's inheritance is covered with blessing, there is a yield for God. It is a magnificent thing. What a need for prayer there is. God will direct the cloud in His own time, but it is the cloud of blessing in answer to the prayer of faith. Can we sustain prayer with God long enough? I think sometimes we give up after looking for an answer the fifth time or the sixth time, but it is only at the seventh time that the cloud the size of a man's hand is seen.

So let us not give up, beloved, if there is any difficulty at all we are faced with, or any sorrow pressing upon our spirits, but let us bear in mind the ultimate enrichment of the inheritance which God has in His saints. Let us pray about it, let us be fervent, let us be effectual and do not let us give up, even if we have seen nothing yet in the way of an answer. Some of us have experienced what it is to see the cloud the size of a man's hand; and those who have seen and experienced it know what it is, and there is the tender touch of a man's hand in it. It calls for a good deal of faith in God when we see trouble and experience sorrow week in and week out, month in and month out, year in and year out. But Elijah had it and prayed, and God answered him. He is given to us as an example to follow, so that our faith should be on the increase and our prayer more fervent and effectual.

In closing I would refer to 1 Thessalonians 4 :17. Surely these are clouds of glory, when every thick dark cloud will be gone for ever. We with all the saints shall meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. We shall then gaze adoringly on our Lord Jesus Christ face to face. What a moment that will be for our hearts when, without a cloud, we shall see Him – and faith gives place eternally to sight.

Josiah Harper.

Lancaster, 26th December, 1942.

CHRISTIAN HABITS

Psalm 119:15, 62; Colossians 3:13, 16, Malachi 3:16, 17

There are four Christian habits, if I may use the expression, that I want to bring before you – the habit of meditation, the habit of prayer, the habit of Christian intercourse or conversation, and, finally, the habit of praise. These are the four things about which I want to say a few words of a practical character. None of these things should be spasmodic with Christians; they should be habitual. It is God's desire to see the life of Jesus coming out in us, and the characteristics of that life. All these four things were found in the life of Jesus, and should therefore come out in us: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). They are habits which are not confined to Christianity, though they come out, of course, in a very much fuller and more intimate way in accordance with the revelation that has been made known to us in Christianity; but these are habits seen in men of faith from the beginning.

The first thing, therefore, I would press upon your attention, is the importance of the habit of meditation. It is a habit that is easily neglected. Modern days are so full of bustle and business that we do not acquire and continue in this habit, and there is a danger of our becoming very shallow and superficial in our knowledge of God. If I could encourage anyone to spend more time in meditation, I should feel my words had not been in vain.

In Psalm 119 you will find the Psalmist says that he will meditate on God's precepts, on His statutes, on His law and on His testimonies; he tells us he does meditate on them; or, he gives himself over to the meditation of them; seven times over it is referred to in the Psalm, showing, I think, the perfection of that form of exercise. It came out in the Lord Jesus and should characterise all of us. Various expressions are used. In verse 148 he says he anticipates "the night watches," and in another, that he

meditates on His law “all the day.” So that it is evidently a firmly established occupation of his soul; his mind is set upon it. And that is the way we really get our strength. Seven times it is mentioned in the Psalm that the speaker would meditate on God’s words; but you will find also that it says in verse 27, “I will meditate upon thy wondrous works” (*Darby Translation and others*), so that whether it be on His word or His work, meditation is the thing, the habit of being before God, not only in public, but also in private. We can pray in public, but meditation is largely connected with private exercise. Isaac, you will remember, “went out to meditate in the field at the eventide,” Gen. 24:63. We get the thing set forth in the Scriptures; it implies power of spiritual concentration – a power greatly to be desired, and one which can be cultivated.

In the epistle to the Colossians we are exhorted to set our minds on things above; chap. 3:2. It implies that our thoughts are to be concentrated on “things above.” Then in regard to moral things, the apostle says in Philippians 4:8: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue; and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Instead of our thoughts wandering about all over the world, instead of our minds being occupied in the sphere of human thought, how blessed it is, in the presence of God, to sit and meditate upon His words – what He says; for how can we possibly understand their meaning if we do not meditate upon them and on His works. We can meditate on God’s works in creation, and even more on His works in redemption; we can meditate on what God has done for us. That is a habit I desire to bring before you very earnestly, that we may encourage it, so that it may become established with us – a habit by use, so that we may be firmly fixed in the truth. There is another very remarkable verse in Psalm 119 (v. 164); it says “Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.” He is so impressed with the statutes and the

testimonies of God that he praises God seven times a day!

Now we, as Christians have a wonderful object of contemplation. We are constantly reminded of it in the New Testament. In the epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, the apostle says several times over, "Consider." "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," (chap. 3:1); "Consider how great this man was," (chap. 7:4); "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," (chap. 12:3). These and other scriptures imply a settled habit of thought. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:29); and "we contemplated his glory," (v.14). And again the apostle Paul says, "we all ... beholding ... the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory," 2 Cor. 3:18. That does not mean a passing thought, it implies real, spiritual concentration on what is before us. It is not the mind taken up with argumentative, logical considerations, but the mind and heart wholly engrossed with the object before it – the Person of Christ, His words and works; with things above; with what is honest and of good report, true and virtuous; so that the soul is filled with what is good and pure, with what is lovely and of God. It is in that way that a healthy spiritual constitution is built up because the mind is filled with Christ, with what is positive.

Now this leads in an increased degree to the second habit of soul which I wish to speak about, that is, the habit of prayer; because as we get into the presence of God we feel the need of prayer if there is to be power for meditation, for we are but creatures, and so we turn to God, not only in regard of meditation, but in regard of everything.

Now I would like to draw attention to the importance, as regards our private prayers as well as our public prayers, of how we begin and how we leave off. If you knew what I said to God you would know me pretty well, and if I knew what you said to God every day – every hour it may be – I should know you very

well; better than in any other way. Public prayers disclose what a man is: for instance, if his prayers have a universal bearing they show where his thoughts and interests are. You remember how the Pharisee stood and prayed with himself; his prayer disclosed just what he was. If you had heard that prayer you would have said, "he is a self-righteous man; that is what he is." So our prayers express what we are. You are yourself with God, you are not artificial.

Now the Lord in the model He gives us begins with the Father's interest: "Hallowed be thy name." That is the first thought. The Father's name is to be sanctified; there is a great sense of what God is, a great sense of divine Persons, and we desire the Father's name to be hallowed, and then all His interests come before us. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." I do not say we should necessarily pray those words, I am only saying that is the manner of prayer the Lord teaches. "Thy will be done." Then we can go on to our needs, "Give us this day our daily bread." A praying man who is with God begins with God and His interests, not with his own needs. I am not trying to lay down the law for you, because I know that when we are in trouble we cry to God about our trouble first; but I am speaking of our ordinary prayers; that there should be first the blessed sense of what God is, and of His interests, and then our interests come in. As we grow in the knowledge of our God our own needs here fall into insignificance. There are times when we are in great trouble, and we can indeed address God at any time, but I am speaking of our set prayers, the prayers which we pray to God on set occasions. I am not telling you how many times you should pray, but I know Christians have felt in all ages how necessary it is to pray to God often. "Pray without ceasing," says the apostle (1 Thess. 5:17). The Lord Himself could continue all night in prayer, as the dependent Man here; in prayer, as in all things, having the pre-eminence. So you will find when God addresses you and you meditate upon His word, the next thing is, instinctively, that you turn to God in prayer,

and as you get further light to meditate upon, so prayer increases.

Now in regard to the third subject, that is, holy conversation, you will find this also mentioned in Colossians. It is interesting to see these points coming out in Colossians, as the outcome of Christian life. Meditation – setting your mind on things above; prayer – “persevere in prayer,” (chap. 4:2), bringing it very definitely before us. Then again, the apostle says, “Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.” Malachi says, “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.” That is a very important and helpful Christian habit – the habit of those that feared the Lord. You may be sure that they spoke of what pertained to the Lord’s interests. So that there is not only personal meditation and personal prayer, but how much help we can get from conversation with each other – holy conversation. I am not speaking of conversation in the sense of manner of life, but in the sense of speaking verbally to one another, and we get great help thus. How often we get help in our places of business through meeting a Christian; we may be working with worldly people and we meet a brother and say a few words about the Lord. Or at other times we are engaged in holy conversation, speaking to one another about the Lord’s interests, and we get encouraged and cheered, and helped. The Lord Himself did not lead a solitary life in one sense; that is to say, He did not live the life of a hermit but He gathered round Himself those to whom He refers as the saints, the excellent in the earth, in whom was all His delight; Psalm 16:3. He found them often of little understanding; still he spoke with them, and they went wherever He went. It must have been a very remarkable sight – I daresay you have often thought of it – to see the Lord passing through Palestine on foot, accompanied by a number of people. There were the twelve and there were the women who ministered to Him of their substance, quite a distinct gathering of people, and the Lord went with them and spoke to

them. He was a great Teacher; still He spoke with them; they were His; He loved them despite their faults, despite their bluntness and their stupidity. I find it difficult to think of anything more wonderful than the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, leaving the angelic hosts of heaven and being found down here, passing His life in obscurity with a few humble folk; going about with the fulness of divine love in His heart, and conversing with them on such wonderful, intimate terms.

Is it not a wonderful thought that He, the Lord of glory, One of the three Persons of the Godhead, should come down here and go about with these humble men and women, receiving of their sustenance, taking what they had to give Him, accepting even a garment woven from the top throughout from them, when, had He asserted His rights, He could have commanded legions of angels! But He accepts this lowly place and engages with His disciples in holy conversations, of many of which we have the record; He instructs them, He hears and He answers their questions – some of them, no doubt, we should think unintelligent. But there He was treading this lowly path and engaging in pure, wonderful conversation! You remember on one occasion how their hearts burned within them as He talked with them by the way and while He opened to them the Scriptures; Luke 24:32. He was heavenly in His thoughts, heavenly in His character, and heavenly in His conversation. That is an important habit for us. I find myself deficient in it; that is one of the reasons why I am speaking of it; I find myself deficient in this habit of engaging in holy conversation about the things of God. Perhaps you say you find it difficult to speak to others about the Lord's things; well, I would say, break the ice and begin, because the habit formed grows, and it becomes easier as you go on.

Now, in addition to these three things, there is the habit of praise. And it is very interesting to see that all these other things culminate in praise. You find throughout the five books of Psalms that whatever the experience in the several books may be and

however varied they may be, at the end of each there is an ascription of praise to God. At the end of the last book you will find half a dozen psalms which conclude the series, which end, not only the last book, but the whole of the five books; they are the culmination of God's ways as experienced by the writers, prophetically or otherwise. If you study the detail, you will see how the experiences of the Psalms culminate in praise, in each book. I will turn you to one other example. Psalm 72, which is the last psalm of book 2, ends in verse 17, and then in verse 18 there is praise, "Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things! And blessed be his glorious name for ever! and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen, and Amen." And what does the psalm commence with? "O God, give the king thy judgments, and thy righteousness unto the king's son ... In his days shall the righteous flourish." He is introducing Christ as the millennial King, and that is the culmination of the experience of that book. God introduces Christ and the world to come, and you get this ascription of praise to God, because the soul is entranced with Christ and with what God is going to bring in through Him! Psalm 41 closes book 1. There it says "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! Amen, and Amen!" It is a beautiful ascription, though not so full as that which closes book 2. The Psalms are experimental, even the prophetic ones, and you do not get the issue of God's ways and dealings with you until you turn to Him in praise. That is a principle, and you will find it true in your own experience. If you have been through exercise which has led to meditation and prayer, and holy conversation also, then the effect on your soul will be that you turn to praise. At the end of Jacob's life, you will recollect, he "worshipped on the top of his staff." (Heb. 11:21). He had had a long and varied experience not all to his credit; and can any of us say that all has been to our credit? – I know not. But if we cannot say all our experience has been to our credit, we can say that all has been used of God for our profit, and when we see the profit, our heart rises up with thankfulness in the

New Testament! “Singing with grace in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16); “making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). That is the issue of your exercises. Take your sorrows, for example; you have sorrows, and you learn in them, perhaps, what you are; but, on the other hand, you get enriched by learning what God is; the Lord has become more precious to you – you have gained more than you have lost, for the Lord has become more precious to you; you have gained spiritually. You have gone through the deepest sorrow, the deepest trial, but in the end you raise your heart in thankfulness to God; you have reached the object God had for you in it.

God loves the praises of His people; all heaven is to be filled with His praise. That is the blessed issue of all His ways with us; you have come to know Him better and you cannot know Him better without praising Him. God being what He is and we being what we are – men, however privileged – the result of a knowledge of God must be worship! That is a wonderful end. How it defeats the machinations of the enemy! How it sets aside all that Satan desires! He would get us into trouble and make us doubt God and fill our hearts with fears and discomfort. But God would make us know Himself, and in the knowledge of Him we not only get comfort, but we turn to praise, and that is the grand result, the grand culmination of God’s blessed ways with us.

How far is this true of us? It was true enough of those servants of the Lord, Paul and Silas, in prison when they were praising God and singing, and the prisoners heard them! We may be in places where it is impossible to raise our voices, but we can sing in our hearts. If we have the happy sense of what God is to us, and of what He is in Himself, in His character, we turn with praise to Him. How that is exemplified in the Lord, the great Model for us! When He had done all His wonderful works in those cities and had to say, “We have piped to you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you and ye have not wailed” (*Matthew 11:17*),

for they refused Him, He turns to the Father and says, “I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou has hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight” (vv. 25, 26). Although He had to say, “Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida!” He does not complain; He says, “I praise thee, Father.” His ways are absolutely perfect. After the sorrow, the forsaking of the cross, as come forth in resurrection, He says, “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (*Hebrews 2:12*)!

May we inquire in God’s presence, with humble spirits, knowing how far we are from that which God desires for us, as to how far we are formed in the habit of meditation and of prayer. How far does holy conversation engage us, and the spirit of thankfulness pervade our hearts, as the result of God’s gracious dealings with us, and the revelation of His love and of Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ?

C.C. Elliott (1866-1949). Reproduced from “Things Concerning Himself” No. 90 (1976).

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN EXPECTATIONS

A man lost his job in an unfair way and fell into depression. His unwavering lament: “They have no right to treat me this way.” A young woman shocked her friends by leaving her husband. When questioned she merely replied, “He wasn’t meeting my needs.” An older couple became uninvolved in their local assembly because they sensed a lack of love there. These people all have at least two things in common: 1) they have legitimate complaints; and 2) they are crippling their own lives.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, they have determined that they will be happy and functional only if others perform well. They have fallen into the trap of ***human expectations***. Jeremiah calls this trap a curse and a departure from

the Lord, and says this about the one who falls into it: “He shall not see when good comes” (*Jeremiah 17:6*). Of course the man who lost his job knew that “all things work together for good to those who love God,” but the unfairness of men kept him from enjoying the truth of God. The young wife no longer wished to hear about her husband’s good points. Nor did the disgruntled couple have any interest in simply doing good in the assembly in spite of others’ failures.

The worst feature of the human expectation trap is that *it shuts God out of our thinking*. We forget that Christianity works with what it brings, not with what it finds. We feed on people’s failures rather than on Christ’s perfections. But there is hope – the hope that comes by declaring our independence of others’ performance, and seeking with the help of the Lord to simply live for Him. This is true liberty!

Grant W. Steidl. Reproduced from “The Lord is Near” for 24th March, 2021, by kind permission.

THE REMOVAL OF THE PROPS

We are all so terribly prone to lean on some creature-prop, to sit beside some creature-stream, to trust in an arm of the flesh, to cling to what we can see, to rest in the palpable and tangible. The things that are seen and temporal (2 Corinthians 4:18) have oftentimes more weight with us than the things which are unseen and eternal. Hence it is our ever-faithful Lord sees it right and good to sweep away our creature-props, and dry up our creature-streams, in order that we may lean upon Himself, the eternal Rock of our salvation, and find all our springs in Himself, the living and exhaustless Fountain of all blessing. He is jealous of our love and confidence, and He will clear the scene of everything that might divide our hearts with [*from*] Himself. He knows it is for our souls’ full blessing to be wholly cast upon Himself, and hence He seeks to purify our hearts from every hateful idol. *C.H. Mackintosh (1820-96); extracted from his paper “Bethany.”*

One who is carried about, shifting here and there, proves that he is not established in the word of God – this gives stability. The great difficulty for us is to rest in what we know as the word of God. Orthodoxy is no security for stability: many are orthodox who have no sense in their souls that it is the word of God. The word of God is God Himself, but God expressed. I always believed the Bible as the word of God, but to know I could trust it if all else were broken up is another matter. Suppose every prop were knocked away and all Christian association broken up – what then? Would you cleave to the word of God as your stay? “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psalm 46:2).

F.E. Raven (1837-1903); from “Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews”

Though there will be saints in the time to come who will be subjected, like Job, to the upheaval of all things, yet Job must have some instruction in regard of us. I think it is that we may be free from every prop down here, so as to find our resource in God Himself. I believe every heart will be privy to what I am saying, that we are ever ready to rest in something down here. We have to learn to be loosed from dependence on every prop on which man can rest, so that we may find our portion in God and in Christ. The Spirit is working to that end, so that one can say, I do not thirst; I have sufficiency; I have all and abound; all that the heart could desire in God and in Christ.

F.E. Raven; from “An Open Door for Christ” (1901)

I ask each one, Can you stand alone with Jesus? People want a system as a prop to lean upon but by and by the prop fails them. ... Everything will fail you but Jesus.

F.E. R; from “Christ the Resource for God and for Man” (1902)

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

As it is becoming every day more manifest that we are in the midst of the perilous times (2 Timothy 3), it behoves the Lord's people to be increasingly occupied with the expectation of His return. It is now nearly fifty years * since the cry was raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matthew 25:6). Up till that time the Church had fallen into profound slumber, drugged by the opiate influences of the world, so that the doctrine of the Lord's return for His saints was forgotten, ignored, or denied. † But when, through the action of the Spirit of God, this cry went forth, thousands were startled from their sleep, and, trimming their lamps, went forth once again to meet the Bridegroom. For a season they lived daily in the hope of His return; and so mightily did this hope act upon their hearts and lives that it detached them from everything – every association, habit, and practice – unsuitable to Him for whom they waited, and kept them with their loins girt, and their lights burning, as those who were waiting for their Lord (Luke 12:35, 36). But time went on; and while the doctrine of the Second Advent has been apprehended and taught by increasing numbers, and while the truth has been undoubtedly the support and consolation of many godly souls, it is yet a question if large numbers of the saints of God have not lost its freshness and power. For is it not patent to all observers, that the standard of separation is becoming lower and lower? – that worldliness is on the increase? – that saints are permitting themselves associations out of which they have professedly come? – that many of us, therefore, are in danger of once more falling asleep, even with the doctrine of the hope upon our lips?

If this be so – and it is the subject of common remark – the time has come when the truth on this subject needs to be pressed

*This was written a little before 1879.

†This was the general situation but no doubt there were always some down through the centuries who cherished the hope of the Lord's return – Editor.

home again upon the hearts and consciences of believers. For the Lord is at hand, and He desires that His people should be on the watch-tower, longing and eagerly waiting for His return. Surely therefore it is high time to awake out of sleep, knowing that "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11). "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37). And He Himself has said, "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).

We have in these remarks assumed, and now we proceed to prove from the Scriptures, **that the coming of the Lord Jesus is the distinctive hope of the church**. This might be done from almost every book of the New Testament. We shall cite enough to place the subject beyond a doubt.

First, our Lord Himself prepared His disciples to maintain, after His departure, the expectation of His return. "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." (Matthew 24:45-47). He then proceeds to characterize the evil servant as one who should say, "My Lord delayeth His coming," etc. v. 48), and indicates the punishment into which such an one should fall. The next two parables – that of the virgins, to which reference has been made, and that of the talents – teach distinctly the same lesson, and the more forcibly from the fact that the virgins who fell asleep, and the servants who received the talents, are the same who are dealt with respectively on the Lord's return.

The same instruction is found in St. Mark. "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [For the Son of

man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:33-37).

In the gospel of St. Luke the same truth is repeated again and again. We have quoted one striking passage (Luke 12: 35-37). Another may be added: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, *Occupy till I come*" (Luke 19:12, 13). Then, as in Matthew, we find him coming and examining the servants as to their use of the money entrusted to them (v.15).

One scripture from St. John's gospel will suffice. The disciples were plunged into sorrow at the prospect of their Lord's departure from them. How does He meet the state of their souls? He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again, and receive you unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3).

The four gospels therefore unite in distinct testimony to the return of the Lord for His people, and in the proclamation that this event constitutes their hope during His absence. We pass now to the Acts and the epistles.

Turning first of all to the Acts, what do we find? After His resurrection, the Lord had appeared to His disciples, "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (1:3). The time having come for His ascension, "He led them out as far as to Bethany" (Luke 24:50); and when He

had ended His instructions, “while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, ***shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.***” (Acts 1:9-11.) Could any language be more precise? – or, construed by the circumstances, be more significant? – or, we may add, less likely to be misunderstood? They had seen their Lord depart from them. He was taken up, and they watched His receding form until a cloud intercepted Him from their gaze; and while they behold with mute astonishment, they receive the message that the One they had seen depart should return in like manner (and therefore in Person) as they had seen Him go into heaven. The wonder is that with these distinct words the Church could have ever lost the hope of the Lord’s return.

The evidence of the epistles is no less clear and decided. “So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming” (revelation, margin) “of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:7). “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). “How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven,” etc. (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; see also 2:19; 3: 13; 4:15-18; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2:1; 3:5). “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). Also James 5:7, 8; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 3:11 and 22:7, 12, 20).

Although these are only some of the scriptures which might be adduced, it will at once be seen how largely the subject is dealt with in the word of God; and on examination it will be discovered that this is because it is bound up, interwoven, with the very

essence of Christianity. Take away the hope of the Lord's return, and you at once rob Christianity of its true character. It cannot be too strongly asserted, that it is not a doctrine to be accepted or rejected at pleasure, but that it is a part and parcel of the truth itself, connected with the calling and place of the believer, his relationship to Christ, and his future blessedness. Hence, indeed, St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; and every believer now is converted for the same thing. To be without this hope and expectation, therefore, is to be ignorant of the believer's portion in Christ.

It follows from this that the normal attitude of every believer is that of waiting for Christ. Nay, more, everyone brought upon Christian ground has this characteristic, though he may be all unconscious of it; for the Word says that the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish, took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Their profession therefore – even though they had no oil – was that they were waiting for Christ.

Is this then the attitude of the reader? Are ***you*** waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus? Is this the one blessed hope that cheers your soul along your lonely pilgrim path? Are your eyes ever fixed upon the Bright and Morning Star? Or are you so absorbed in present things that, like the five foolish virgins, you have grown heavy, and fallen asleep?* If, alas! it be so, let the words, "Behold, I come quickly," "Behold the Bridegroom," rouse you from your slumbers, even while there is delay, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. Or perhaps you know the truth of His coming. But the question, beloved reader, is, Are you ***waiting for*** Christ? To know the doctrine is one thing; but it is quite another to be living hourly and daily in the hope of the Lord's return. If you are waiting, your affections are all concentrated on Him whom you expect; you are apart from everything which is not according to His mind and will; you are sitting loose to all that nature holds

*Indeed, all ten virgins slept! – Editor.

dear; and with a full heart you can respond to His announcement of His speedy coming, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

From “The Blessed Hope” by Edward Dennett (1831-1914)

Erratum

There was a mistake in the last issue (No. 112): in the printed copies, in relation to the temptation of Eve in the garden of Eden (page 10) mention was made of “the lust of the flesh,” “the lust of the eyes” and “the lust of the eyes.” The third reference should, of course, been to “the pride of life,” following the sequence in 1 John 2:16. The copy placed on the website was corrected.

POETIC PAGES

God is left out

The nations are troubled and burdened with fear;
Moral darkness is deepening, year after year.
Man’s planning and scheming still cannot bring
God’s peace and contentment to hearts that should sing.
Millions are asking, what brought it about?
This is the answer: GOD IS LEFT OUT.

Gross riot, disorder and evil abound,
While many profess that solutions they’ve found;
Yet these like a bubble just burst in the air,
To add to depression and waves of despair.
Why is hope failing in hearts once so stout?
This is the reason: GOD IS LEFT OUT.

Millions still yearn for assurance and peace,
Yet hearts that are breaking, daily increase;
Many are wandering and lost due to sin,
With consequent fighting and striving within.
There must be a cause; yes, that’s beyond doubt –
This is the trouble: GOD IS LEFT OUT.

Author unknown

The Realm of Light

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” – Revelation 21:23.

There is a realm of light above
This world of strife and sin,
A realm of peace and joy and love
Apart from this world’s din.

That light is radiant, pure, divine,
The light of Jesus’ face,
In which God’s blended glories shine
And fill the holy place.

But He who is the light of heaven
Once came to earth below;
“Light of the world” to us was given,
Both grace and truth to show.

But men loved darkness more than light
And Him they crucified;
Yet faith sees light and love so bright
Expressed when Jesus died.

Raised from the dead, ascended high
Above all other powers,
He brings us to His Father nigh
And makes His own place ours.

The portion of the saints in light
We’re fitted now to share
Yet wait to see His glory bright
And meet Him in the air.

But now the Spirit has been given
To join us with our Head;
He is the earnest sent from heaven
Of glorious things ahead.

Lord, help us as we take our way
Through this world's darkening night
To walk by grace as sons of day,
As children of the light.

.....

There is a realm of light above;
The way is by the cross,
And those who taste its peace and love
Must count this world but loss.

G.S.B. 17th February, 2021.

Wonderful Footprints

I'd like to walk through old Jerusalem,
Explore the dusty streets and hills around,
See whether, though 2000 years ago,
My loving Saviour's footprints can be found.

HIS footprints brought Him to Jerusalem,
Where like lost chicks they needed His kind ways.
He would have gathered them, but they would not,
Though greeting Him with palm leaves and loud praise.

HIS footprints took Him then to Bethany,
To the raised Lazarus and his sisters' home;
And those blessed feet by Mary were anointed,
Just to prepare His body for the tomb.

HIS footprints now led to the Mount of Olives,
And there His sweat as blood dropped to the ground;
Dreading, but willing to endure God's judgment,
He let Himself by wicked men be found.

HIS footprints brought Him to the high priest's house,
To an illegal trial and several lies.

Put under oath, He told them who He was:
They shouted, "Blasphemy! For this, he dies!"

They brought Him to the Roman governor, Pilate;
Claimed this was to avoid the empire's frown.
He judged Him faultless but sent Him to Herod,
Who mocked Him with a scarlet robe and crown.

HIS footprints later brought Him back to Pilate,
Who washed his hands and said, "Behold the Man!"
Yet he delivered Him for crucifixion,
The worst injustice since the world began.

Buffeted, scourged and given a crown of thorns,
With heavier footprints now He bore His cross,
Till there upon the hill of Calvary
For love of all mankind He suffered loss.

Those feet had moved from Bethlehem to Egypt,
Then Nazareth and all round Galilee.
Perfect in all His walk, preaching and healing,
Never was there a Saviour such as He.

So would His feet no longer walk this Earth?
Pierced and now lying dead within a grave?
The heavy stone rolled back to show the world
He'd **risen**, as foretold, with power to save!

A weeping Mary lingered at the tomb;
And, thinking that she saw the gardener there,
Asked through her mist of tears where was her Lord.
'Mary,' He said, and banished all her care.

He joined down-hearted Cleopas and partner
As they walked to Emmaus at twilight.
'Abide with us,' they urged. He blessed the bread.
Then, recognised, He vanished from their sight.

He bade the doubting Thomas feel the marks
Made in His hands and side by nails and spear.
So that disciple cried, "My Lord and God!"
Believing the full deity was here.

Again He walked – would footprints there be seen? -
Where He shared fish and bread in Galilee
With those disciples, seven in all, who knew,
Besides the haul of fish, that it was He.

Full forty days He spent with His disciples,
And on a lofty hill in Galilee
He bade them take His message everywhere,
The good news God ordained to make men free.

Over 500 saw the risen Saviour
Before His steps at Olivet would end.
Told to await God's promised Power from heaven,
Disciples saw Him skyward now ascend.

HIS footprints will be seen on Earth again,
When He returns, to stand on Olivet;
And He will then rule and judge all the world
With peace and justice never seen as yet.

/P.T.O.

And so our footprints should in spirit turn
Toward the cross and Him who died thereby;
For only thus can our sins be forgiven
And we one day live with our LORD on high.

Michael Godwin, 21st March 2021.

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.