

Words of Peace & Truth



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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

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

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Editorial

It is good to remind ourselves that Christianity is based on facts. The coming into manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, His perfect life, His death, resurrection and ascension: these things are all solid, witnessed facts. The apostle Peter says, “For 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” (2 Pet. 1:16).

Likewise, faith (in God, in His word and in the Person and work of Christ) is no imaginary matter; it relates to things that are real, though unseen (Hebrews 11:1) and its exercise brings real results, including eternal and present salvation.

In the post-truth society which surrounds us today, however, there are strong and ugly trends based not on anything factual or true but on feelings and fancies – whether about the behaviour of others, the nature of one’s own body, or even historical events. Practices, policies and even penalties are being implemented based on such ephemeral and deceptive notions.

Even as Christians we tend to be affected by the climate in which we live. We can easily, for example, search within us for the basis of our peace instead finding it in Christ. Let us seek the Lord’s help that we may “abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings” (Colossians 1:24 – Darby Trans.).

G.S.B.

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A Musing on the

Argyroneta (Water Spider, or Diving Bell Spider)

“If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2).

Let us carry our air with us.

Do you know about the argyroneta? This marsh spider lives under the water in the manner of a diver, constructing for itself among the aquatic plants a sort of diving bell woven of silk and impermeable, which it fills with air. Periodically the argyroneta returns to the surface to bring back oxygen in the form of little bubbles attached to the hairs of its abdomen. It is used to inflate its little submarine house in which it breathes, hunts, reproduces and brings up its offspring.

Christians, let us take an example from this ingenious little creature. We are obliged to live, work and bring up our children in a world of which the moral atmosphere is often unbreathable, since it is led by Satan, called “the ruler of the authority of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). It is necessary for us regularly to “surface,” renewing our provision of heavenly air, without which we will suffocate ourselves. It is the regular reading of the Bible and prayer that will maintain our relations with God, and with our Saviour Jesus Christ who is in heaven.

What do the cosmonauts do who are called to live for days or months outside the earth’s atmosphere? They take their air with them. This is what we have to do each time that, despite ourselves, we are found in doubtful company or an environment hostile to God. Let us take “our air,” that of heaven, with us and breathe it.

/ P.T.O.

The article on the previous page is a translation of a piece that appeared in “La Bonne Semence” (“the Good Seed”) for 1st June 2023.

Editor’s Note:- Surely the great example for drawing our “air” from heaven is our Lord Jesus Himself. Having become Man, He grew up “as a root out of dry ground,” drawing nothing from the world around Him but everything from His Father above. John’s Gospel particularly brings this out, in which He is recorded as saying (8:23), “Ye are from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” Previously (chapter 3, v.13) He had spoken of Himself as “the Son of man who is in heaven,” even when He was physically here on earth; this no doubt implies His deity, but all that He said and did as in this world flowed from His relationship with His Father in heaven: “and I, what I have heard from Him, these things I say to the world” (8:26); “as the Father has commanded Me, thus I do” (14:31). In the synoptic Gospels too, we find that the Lord would spend the night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12) or rise “in the morning long before day” to pray alone (Mark 1:35). Even as He approached His death on the cross, He said “the Father is with Me” (John 16:32). Without doubt, the Lord Jesus, “the Second Man, out of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47) moved, spoke and acted here on earth with an aura about Him that set Him apart from other men and yet gave a distinctive character to all that He said and did. How we must adore Him in His uniqueness and perfection! – and yet He has left us a model that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). The atmosphere of the world around us is increasingly stifling, as if filling with acrid fumes out of the pit; let us follow the Lord Jesus in drawing our air from heaven.

THE LIFTING UP OF THE SON OF MAN

“Jesus therefore said to them (*the Jews*), When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father has taught Me I speak these things” (John 8:28).

There are three occasions on which the Lord spoke of His being lifted up, recorded in John’s Gospel. The first is in chapter 3, verses 14-16, where the Lord spoke about Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, and that He Himself would be lifted up, “that every one whosoever believes on Him may not perish, but have life eternal.” In the wilderness Israel had to look at the serpent to live, but we who have not seen Jesus receive the blessing through believing.

In John 12 the Lord spoke about the way He would draw all to Himself (verses 31 to 33). This has been fulfilled and is still being fulfilled with myriads being drawn to a crucified Man lifted up between heaven and earth.

Turning back to John 8, verse 28, we find that the Jews were going to lift up the Son of man, and, having done so, they would know, He said, “that I am He.” This is remarkable, because, while we speak very often of the Lord’s sufferings, we do not very often think of the way they affected those who crucified Him.

In Matthew’s Gospel, we find that the Lord was brought before the High Priest and the scribes; and in chapter 26, verse 63, the High Priest adjured Him by the living God that He should tell them if He were the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered in the affirmative (in the way that a person would speak to someone superior to him): “thou hast said.” And then He went on to speak about the way the Son of Man would be sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. The High Priest would certainly have realised that Jesus was referring to Daniel 7, verses

13-14, and he called it blasphemy, saying that he was liable to the penalty of death. The Lord was taken before the Roman governor, who questioned Him. Pilate was prepared to release a prisoner at the feast of Passover; so he then asked the crowd whether he should release “Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ.” The crowd cried for Barabbas. The name “Barabbas” means the “Son of the father” and in John chapter 8, verse 44, Jesus had said that the Jews who opposed Him were “of the devil, as your father.” So Barabbas was released and Jesus was crucified. The High Priest and those with him must have been very satisfied at the way things were going. The Lord was crucified at the third hour (9 a.m.), suffering pain, indignities and rejection from all who were there, except a small band of those who loved Him. But at twelve noon the sky darkened. The darkness was over the whole land, probably over the whole earth. No-one would have known how long it was going to last, or if the darkness would ever be lifted, but at the ninth hour (3 p.m.) Jesus cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27, verses 45 and 46). Then Jesus cried with a loud voice; John tells us that He said, “It is finished” and delivered up His spirit. “The veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened.” Jesus had died upon the cross! The veil of the temple is reputed to have been a hand-breadth thick and when it was torn open it could be seen that the Holiest was empty. The gospel was to go out to the Gentiles, for “the centurion and they who were with Him on guard over Jesus, seeing the earthquake and the things that took place, feared greatly, saying, Truly this Man was Son of God” (Matthew 27, verse 54).

John tells us in his Gospel (ch. 19, vv. 19, 20) that Pilate had written a title on the cross: “Jesus the Nazaraean, the King of the Jews.” It was written in Hebrew, the religious language; in Greek, the commercial language; and in Latin, the political language. Scripture does not refer to Jesus again as King until He comes in glory.

Then Joseph of Arimathaea comes on the scene. The body of Jesus was laid in his new tomb “and having rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, [he] went away.” The high priest and the Pharisees were active, however, because they remembered how Jesus had spoken about rising again after three days. They went together to Pilate, calling Jesus a deceiver: “Command therefore that the sepulchre be secured until the third day, lest His disciples should come and steal Him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead.” “Pilate said to them, Ye have a watch:” (I think they were the temple guards rather than the Roman soldiers) “go, secure it as well as ye know how. And they went and secured the sepulchre, having sealed the stone, with the watch besides.” All this must have happened before the commencement of the sabbath at 6 p.m. The Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb; the Jews regarded part of a day as being a whole, so that the Lord was raised very early in the morning of the third day. Matthew tells us of another earthquake: “an angel of the Lord, descending out of heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his look was as lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became as dead men” (ch. 28, vv. 2-4). Later on we are told that “some of the watch went into the city, and brought word to the chief priests of all that had taken place” (Matt. 28:11). They gave a large sum of money as a bribe to the soldiers to “say that His disciples coming by night stole Him while [they] were sleeping.” “And they took the money and did as they had been taught.” It must have cost the chief priests a great deal more than they had paid Judas! The Lord had risen from among the dead on the very day of the feast of the firstfruits, recorded in Leviticus chapter 23, verses 9-14.

After these events the priests would have heard nothing more for fifty days after He was raised. Peter stood up and preached to the Jews gathered at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost. He read from the prophet Joel, chapter 2, verse 28, in the last days the Spirit would be poured upon all flesh ... the sun would be turned to

darkness (this has been partially fulfilled, but not entirely) and “it shall be that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Peter finished his address by saying, “Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Peter never called the Lord ‘King and Christ;’ the Lord’s kingship is in abeyance until He comes again, but *we* own Him as our Lord.

Three thousand souls were saved at that preaching and more as the days went by. The High Priest and the Pharisees tried to stop the apostles preaching the gospel. Eventually this led to the martyrdom of Stephen, but the gospel was going out through Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth via the Ethiopian eunuch, who took the gospel home with him. But all this time the number of believers was multiplying and the chief priests had no means of preventing it, when Stephen rose up (Acts 6:8), “full of grace and power, [and] wrought wonders and great signs among the people.” Acts chapter 7 records his address to the council, concluding with his accusing them of delivering up and murdering the Just One; they had “received the law as ordained by the ministry of angels and [had] not kept it.” Then Stephen told them that he saw the heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Stephen became the first martyr, for they cast him out of the city and stoned him. This is the only occasion in Scripture when Jesus is seen standing at God’s right hand. Other scriptures refer to Him as sitting, having finished the work that God gave Him to do on earth. But here He is standing to receive His martyred saint and perhaps also to communicate that if Stephen’s address had been received, then He would return. But, as in Luke 19, verse 14, Christ was hated and an embassy was sent after Him, “saying, we will not that this Man should reign over us.” The Lord now apprehended Saul of Tarsus, a great enemy of the believers in Christ, converted him and sent him to the nations afar off.

He testimony of Christ continued in Jerusalem until in A.D. 70 the Romans destroyed the temple as Jesus had prophesied. The Jews have since been a dispersed and hated people, even to the extent of the Nazi holocaust. Miraculously, the way was opened in 1947 for them to return to the land God had promised to Abraham long ago. As a nation they have returned in unbelief, although we can be thankful that many Jewish individuals are accepting Christ today. But the day will come when all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26).

Many Old Testament scriptures speak of the way in which God will deal with Israel after the church has been taken to glory. Jeremiah tells us of “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). Zechariah 13 tells us how two thirds of the people “shall be cut off and die,” but the remaining third will pass through God’s refining hands. These will call on God’s name and He will answer them: He “will say, It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is My God.”

Then they shall know that the One who revealed Himself to Moses as the I AM is the One whom they lifted up to die as He had prophesied in John 8:28.

Tony Sheldrake (June 2023)

Fragment

Now Christ has been lifted up from the earth, that He might be the point of attraction for all. He attracts us to Himself as the One who died *from* the earth. It has been said that He could hardly have died *on* the earth; it would have been unsuitable that the righteous One who had glorified God on the earth should die on it. He is lifted up out of it vicariously, and, as lifted up from the earth, draws all to Himself. We have each and all, if believers, in one way or another been drawn to Christ Himself, and He is the Head and centre of God’s system – He is the sun of that system. That system is founded on redemption, and the Head of that system is necessarily Christ Himself. *F.E. Raven, Address at Devizes, 1901.*

HEAVENLY LIGHT AND HOPE

Luke 11:27 – 12:44

I PURSUE the subject of the formation of a new and heavenly company with heavenly hopes, as given us in Luke's gospel. The instruction as to it had to be given by the Lord in the face of, and in contrast to, that which was formal and yet evil in principle. Hence side by side with the development of the heavenly principles which were true in Jesus and taught by Him, we have the exposure and judgment of the dead and wicked form of Judaism. But we have to remember that *all* mere formalism is thereby exposed and judged, for Christianity has lapsed into an evil system of formality.

Whatever privilege there might have been in Messiah having been born of Israel according to the flesh, the real spring of blessing was in the reception of the word of God, and in the word of God received for its own sake, apart from signs which had no moral effect on the conscience. The Jews were an evil generation, unable to recognise the voice of God in testimony to them in the Person of His Son. The heathen Ninevites had listened to the preaching of Jonas, and the Gentile Queen of the south came from far to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and yet a greater than either Jonas or Solomon was there. We see in both cases how the blessing of the Gentiles by the reception of the word of God is foreshadowed,

Besides preaching to the Ninevites, Jonas was a sign to them, a sign of judgment and mercy. The word of God in the midst of Israel was now being spoken by the Son, and while judging the generation as evil, He Himself as Son of man would be to them the sign and witness of judgment, but to those who received the testimony, of mercy and salvation. God's mind was now made known by Christ; He was Light, and those who came in saw the Light. It was not merely that what Christ said was true, but He was the truth. He was Light, and everything was made manifest by it and put into its proper place. The Jews were manifested as an evil

generation, and the door was evidently open for the Gentiles to come in and see the light. If everything is put upon the footing of the reception of the word of God, of the light which shone in Jesus the Son of God, then the new company, though it began with Jews, could be formed also of Gentiles begotten of the word.

The Lord was, so to speak, forming in principle a new kind of vessel of light. The full effect will be seen in the heavenly city. “Her light [or shining] is like unto a stone most precious.” That the body should be luminous must have been to the disciples a new thought altogether. The light of Christ was to be continued, was to shine in others, but it was new to the Jewish thoughts of the disciples that the *body* should be luminous; in order to this a single eye was needed that only had Christ, in whom the light of God shone, for its object. On the other hand, it was possible that where Christ as light had shone, and where He had been outwardly recognised, the light might be darkness, and then how great the darkness! The light in saints is not merely the acknowledgment of certain doctrines, but *they* are light. “Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (*Ephesians* 5:8). It was heavenly light that came in Christ, and this light was to be continued in a company separated from the evil generation of mere formalism and wickedness, but children of light through having a single eye for Christ.

The end of chapter 11 is a terrible indictment of the religious leaders of Jewish unbelief and formalism; and then in chapter 12 there is the warning to those who were to continue the light when He was gone, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, that is, of putting on mere outward appearance. A Pharisee’s robe had nothing of light in it, “the *body* is light;” the man himself is governed in deportment and ways by Christ known as light in the soul. Then the Lord states the great truth, often enunciated in other connections, that everything will come into manifestation. We may have to wait, but ultimately the two cities in the end of Revelation will be the full manifestation, on

the one hand, of all that has been formal and hypocritical; and, on the other, of all that has shone with the light of Christ, though often unnoticed here. The character of Babylon is fully unveiled, and the shining of the New Jerusalem is displayed. It is a blessed thought that everything will come into manifestation, and that what was despised and hated of men will be vindicated. The patient continuance in well-doing of those who “seek for glory, honour and incorruptibility” (*Romans 2:7*), though taken little account of here, will come into manifestation there. The thought of this manifestation should greatly affect us, so that we may disallow in ourselves all that is inconsistent with the light of Christ.

I need not dwell on the former part of chapter 12: it has often been remarked that the Lord’s teaching is to the effect that the new company might be here for Him, set free from fear and from care. There is one verse which seems to be connected somewhat with what has gone before: “The life [or soul] is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.” The soul of man is not that of a beast, to be nourished only with food, and yet the foolish man of verse 19 so thought. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” The soul of man has to say to God, and God has to say to the soul. It is the place where divine work goes on by the word of God. And the body is not merely for raiment; God has far greater thoughts. We have seen in chapter 11 that the body is to be luminous with the light of Christ down here. It is, so to speak, a vessel for display, not of raiment, but of Christ. God’s thought for it is, that it should be conformed to Christ’s body of glory, according to the power by which all things will be subdued to Himself (*Philippians 3:21*). We are to seek the kingdom in which there is such power; it subdues to Christ in whom all that is of God is told out; and it is the power of the kingdom which effectuates every purpose of the Father’s love. How are we lifted above the anxieties of earth, in the sense of the Father’s good pleasure which gives us the kingdom? It is a blessed thought that the Christian can connect the everyday mercies of his path, often so small as to be unnoticed, with the good

pleasure of the Father's purpose about him. God cares for a sparrow, but He cares for a believer as an object of His good pleasure in Christ.

“O Lord! ’twas sweet the thought
That Thou wast mine!
But brighter still the joy
That I am Thine.”

The Father loved the disciples because they loved Christ (*see John 16:27*). However feeble their love appeared, yet they loved Him, and Christ well knew this, and that He was their treasure. He had made Himself indispensable to them. This is the secret of watching for Christ. He was the treasure of the disciples' hearts, and He is our treasure. Here the heart is in question; “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” If Christ is our treasure, our hearts will be with Him. Then the body comes before us again; “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye, yourselves, like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.” There is nothing to unfold in such a verse. We want hearts to respond to that which the Lord sets before us. Though absent, we are never to lose sight of Himself. We do not belong to the world system, but to Him. The Father's good pleasure has given us another portion, His kingdom, and Christ is everything there; it is the kingdom of the Son of His love (*Colossians 1:13*), and Christ will be the Dispenser of all its blessedness to us when its power and glory are set up at His coming. We shall fully enter then into the blessedness of the paradise of God.

To Peter's question, “Lord, speakest thou this parable unto *us*” – that is, specially to the twelve – “or even to all?” the Lord's answer (ver. 42) opens a door of service in His household to Gentiles; the faithful and prudent steward might be found also among them. What is contemplated is that during the Lord's absence He has a household, which needed to be tended and

cared for. We have thus the two characteristics of the new company during the Lord's absence; there is the affection which watches for Him, and faithfulness to His interests here below. The apostle gives us these two marks as characterising both the Ephesians and Colossians; their "faith in the Lord Jesus" made present to their hope all that which He has entered into in glory, and of which He is the centre; and their "love to all the saints" bound them up with Christ's interests upon earth. The wise and prudent servant regards the saints as belonging to Christ. As with the prophecy of Balaam, Israel was looked at in the vision of the Almighty from the top of the rocks as God's people, so the saints are looked at from on high as belonging to Christ, and are served for His sake.

It is true that Ephesus soon left its first love, and the Colossians were in danger of slipping away from the Head into worldly elements; but it is blessed for us to be recalled to what was in the mind of the Lord when He spoke of that which should characterise His disciples during His absence. The hope of His return in our hearts arises from the fact that there is faith in Him as sitting at God's right hand, the centre of a world of glory which is yet to be displayed – He the Bridegroom, and all our hopes bound up with Him as those united to Him, those in whom He will be glorified. His coming in glory will be His own vindication as Son of God, as Son of David, and as Son of man according to God's counsels, for He was refused in all His titles and cast out of this world; and our being gathered to Him that we may come with Him will be the vindication of the hope which leads any to leave the world, to wait for Him, and to seek to serve His household here below.

T. H. Reynolds (1830-1930); extracted from "Food for the Faithful," Vol. 5 (1902).

JOSEPH'S NAME

“And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah”
(*Genesis 41:45*).

Joseph had been hated by his brothers, who had first put him in a pit and then sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites travelling to Egypt. There he had been slandered by a seductive woman and imprisoned. In prison he was a blessing to Pharaoh’s chief butler and chief baker but on his release the former forgot Joseph.

God, however, sovereignly over-ruled the situation and Joseph was brought out of prison and set over all the land of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh (*Genesis 41:39-44*). What an accurate foreshadowing of the suffering and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was rejected by the world (particularly by the nation of Israel – *John 1:11*) but has “been exalted by the right hand of God” (*Acts 2:33*)!

We then read that Pharaoh gave Joseph the name of Zaphnath-Paaneah. As an Egyptian name, this has been interpreted as meaning “Saviour of the world,” or “Sustainer of life;” and as a Hebrew name, “Revealer of Secrets.” How wonderfully these various names have been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ!

Although hated by his brothers, Joseph was loved by his father, Jacob, or Israel. “And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons ... and he made him a vest of many colours” (*Gen. 37:3*). When we turn to John’s Gospel we read the sublime statement, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in His hand” (*John 3:35*). Remarkably, just a little further on (there being no division into chapters and verses in the original writing) we have references to Jacob and Joseph. “[Jesus] comes therefore to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near to the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now a

fountain of Jacob's was there" (John 4:5, 6). Let us not think that such details are simply of historical or geographical interest; let us see in them an impressive testimony to the wonderful, divine way in which the Spirit of God has woven beautifully together many threads running through the entirety of the inspired Holy Scriptures, both Old Testament and New, to bring out the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we proceed further in John 4, we find the Lord Jesus fulfilling the name given by Pharaoh in its various translations. Firstly, He offers living water to the poor woman who came to Him by the well. "Whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life" (verse 14). Here we surely see Christ as "the Sustainer of Life."

But if I am to receive the blessings that God offers through His Son, my conscience must first be reached and my past confronted. So the Lord skilfully and graciously touches on the woman's past life and present condition by saying, "Go, call thy husband and come here" (verse 16). This brings from her the immediate reaction, "Sir, I see that Thou art a prophet" (verse 19); but later she says to others, "Come, see a Man who told me all things I had ever done: is not He the Christ?" (verse 29). So we now see the Lord Jesus unmistakably as "the Revealer of Secrets."

Thirdly, "many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him because of the word of the woman" (verse 39). After they had themselves come to Jesus, however, and He had graciously agreed to stay with them, we read that "they said to the woman, It is no longer on account of thy saying that we believe, for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (verse 42). Here we have the third meaning of the name Zaphnath-Paaneah. *G.S.B.*

THE REST OF GOD

Hebrews 4

I wish to speak a little on this wonderful subject – The Rest of God. I dare say that it has often been pointed out to you that the scripture we have read does not speak merely of rest as an abstract thing, but it says definitely, “*His* rest,” that is, the rest of God, and that is a wonderful thing; for when you consider what God is, as it is written, “God is love,” then it follows of necessity, that the rest of God is a rest of divine love.

It is easy to understand that divine love cannot cease from activity, so as to be in perfect and eternal repose, whilst its purpose in regard to its own (*i.e. those who are the objects of that love*) remains in any measure unfulfilled. Now we read a great deal in scripture about the activities of love. I do not mean that we get that expression used, but in the Scriptures there is a great deal of divine activity, and we ourselves are the subjects of that divine activity in a wonderful way, and the spring of it all is love. As it manifests itself to us it may first take the shape of grace, but the spring whence all flows is divine love.

I think that one might boldly say that there was no reason why God should not have swept man away in His wrath but God’s love to man. Beloved friends, it gives us a wonderful sense of what man is when we see him the subject of God’s love. If we thought of man apart from Christ we could not understand it. The love of God for man does not attach itself to man’s sinful condition, for that is repugnant to God, as shown in the cross. But man is the subject of the love of God, and we can understand it somewhat when we see Christ come into manhood, and take His place as Head of every man. Satan conspired against God, and brought seductive power to bear upon man; he stole away man’s heart

from God, and ruined man by bringing him into present misery and under the judgment of God; but all this did not alter God's thought concerning man. On the contrary it has only served as an occasion for the complete manifestation of all that He is, and of His purpose for man. I say then, that the love of God is the spring of the divine activities. But activities are not rest; as it is here said, "He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." When activities reach their end rest has come.

There is a reference here to creation. God formed the earth as the dwelling place of man, and set man in the midst of all that He had formed, as a creature suited to the place of supremacy over it all, and having completed it all He pronounced it good and He rested. There was divine complacency in all that had been formed. The entrance of sin broke up that rest. Sin is an abhorrent thing to God. The creature He had formed for His own pleasure was now impelled by a rebellious will, was in present misery and under judgment. In this state of things there could be no rest for God.

Through all the Old Testament times God was active and spoke in various ways, but He had no resting place. The Lord Jesus came into the world but He took no resting place. As regards outward circumstances He was born in a stable and laid in a manger; He was not born in the midst of ease and affluence. He was known as the carpenter's son, and to the man who exclaimed, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." It was an affecting contrast. The meanest of His creatures could rest; but why? Because they had not love. They had instinct, but not the love that filled His heart. It was love that made Him a homeless stranger, while, on the other hand, the hatred of man to God allowed Him no resting

place. In John 5 we have His affecting answer to the accusations of His enemies, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." There had been no rest for the Father, for He (as the Lord presents Him in that gospel) is the source of all blessedness, and as such He could find no rest in regard to man. The Son was here in perfect agreement with this; as He said again afterwards, "I and my Father are one." Counsel is of the Father, and the Son came that all that was in the Father's counsel might be fulfilled, and therefore He was in exact accord with the Father. He differed from the religious men who opposed Him, thinking more of their religious observances of the Sabbath than they did of the activity of the grace and mercy of the Son of God; but though He differed from them He was in perfect consonance with the Father.

Now I come to speak for a moment of the death of Christ. In it God was perfectly glorified as to sin. It was a wonderful point in man's history when all the question of good and evil, introduced at man's fall, was divinely taken up, and perfectly solved in the death of God's blessed Son. Oh, the wonders of the death of Christ are far beyond our apprehension! But it is marvelous to sit and contemplate the glories which come to light in His death. God was perfectly glorified. And now a wonderful thing takes place; man is in the glory of God. God has raised Him from the dead and given Him glory.

Satan sought to throw man out of the earth which God had prepared for him, and he sought to do it by the most abominable means, that is, by tempting him to sin, so that God should be compelled to judge His own handiwork; but here is a marvellous answer to Satan. Man, that he would have thrown out from the earth, is, in Christ, put in the highest place in heavenly glory. That is God's answer; He shows what man is to His own heart. Even the earth with its

teeming abundance and varied beauty such as it was when it first proceeded from the hand of its Maker, was not sufficient to show how God regarded man; but we see it in the place which is given to man in highest heavenly glory. What can be Satan's thought of that? I can understand the rage of Satan as it appears in the book of Revelation. In chapter 12 the Man-child, whom the dragon sought to destroy, is caught up to God and to His throne, and there is war in heaven resulting in the devil and his angels being cast down. This is what the blessed God brings about. Man is placed in heaven and Satan is cast down.

This is the point we have reached. On the one hand we have God, in the Son, come down into the very deepest depths of shame and woe, and even into the place of judgment, and then the answer to that is, that man, in Christ, is enthroned on high. He reaches the highest point of glory. Under Satan man has sought after glory. He glorifies himself and lives deliciously; but the glory of man is as the flower of the grass; it fades away. God has given to Him whom He raised from the dead a glory which is unfading and eternal.

Now there is a resting place for the heart of God. He could look with complacency and delight upon His beloved Son when He took His place on earth, and from that moment all God's dealings with men have had regard to Christ. Now He has reached, as Man, the presence of God, and in Him is seen the purpose of God concerning man. It is as yet seen in Him alone, but it is seen in Him who is before God's face.

But the activities of God's love run on, because those whom He has given to the Son, and whom He, as Captain of their salvation, is bringing to glory (*Hebrews 2:10*), have not yet reached the place where He is. It is a great thing to see the end to which God is conducting us, because the more clearly we see it the more clearly we can understand the

ways which God takes in conducting us. They are all the ways of His love. I wish that we appreciated them better. He chastens and scourges, but why? Because He loves us, and loving us He will not have us stop short of the end which His love has in view for us. How apt *we* are to stop short of the end, like the young eagles which are in view in Moses's song (Deut. 32:11). They would gladly continue to nestle under the down of the parent bird, but she does not allow it. She stirs up her nest and takes her young and bears them on her pinions, for otherwise they would never learn to fly. But she does not forsake them, nor suffer them to fall to the ground. So it is in the ways of God with His people. He stirs up our nest, that there may be with us exercise which is necessary for our spiritual development, but all the while He takes care of us. We think sometimes that we shall fall to the ground, but no such thing, for the wings of God, so to speak, are under us. I speak of this in passing to show the present character of the ways of His love; if we understand the end of His love we can understand its ways.

A child at school has many difficult lessons and many exercises, and he might say to himself, If my father loves me why does he allow me to pass through all this? In the long run he learns to appreciate his father's love and its ways, for he sees that what he has passed through has fitted him for the place in life for which his father intended him. Thus, so long as we are here, we are the subjects of God's ways, and the end is that He will have us in conformity to His Sou when all necessity for the activity of His love will cease and He will rest in His love. Thus Zephaniah speaks in view of God's earthly people, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (*ch. 3, v.17*). I think it is very much like a mother who has to be active in regard to her child; when all need of activity ends her love does not end, but she takes her child and rests and rejoices over the child of her love.

Thus God's love will never end, though its activity will, but He will be restful in His love. That is what I understand by the rest of God.

I dare say that the expression is broader than what merely relates to us, and embraces the whole of the world to come, but we have our peculiar place in it, and that is, that God is bringing many sons unto glory. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This is the great end which God has in view for us. And let us notice the words, "**For whom** are all things." God has not merely **our blessing** in view, but His own pleasure and satisfaction. Comparatively little might satisfy us; but everything must be for the pleasure of His love. And "**by whom** are all things;" for that end is reached by His own activity. How shall we understand what is embodied in the words "many sons?" – only by seeing what is set forth in God's Son. Romans 8 gives us a little light on the purpose of God that we may be able to understand His ways, and there we have this wonderful thought that He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. And this is not as He was upon earth in humiliation, but as He now is before the face of God. Not that there is any difference in Him personally, for this epistle assures us that He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever; all the excellency that was in Him here upon earth abides. But there is a great difference in His circumstances. He was here in sorrow and humiliation, and subject to all the scorn and hatred of men; now He has entered upon the joy that was set before Him, the fulness of joy that is in the presence of God, the pleasures which are forevermore at His right hand. The love of God will never cease its activity until we are conformed to His image there.

This is the light which is given to us in Romans 8, where also we read of all creation waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. It now groans and travails together in pain, but it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. The children of God are not now known in their proper distinction. Men may know us as religious, and may account us fanatics, but they do not know us as the children of God. The day is coming when they will do so. God will bring the many sons to glory; we shall reach our own proper distinction, and the whole creation will be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. This is God's blessed end. Beloved friends, what an end it will be! We shall be freed from every hindrance and encumbrance. Like God's blessed Son, we shall have forever the uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine love which has been active toward us till its activity is needed no longer, and it rests in perfect repose.

The rest of God's love is that concerning which a promise has been left us. We are to enter into *His* rest. The apostle desires that we might be stimulated in regard to it, that not one of us should seem to come short of it. Many who bear the name of Christian are, alas, seeming to come short of it, seeking rest short of God's rest, having something less than that as their goal. Is that a worthy thing? Should not the very sight which God presents of that rest stimulate us to reach it, and give to us the purpose that nothing short of it shall be our resting place? In regard to this the word of God, which is next spoken of, is of great help to us. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His

sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

This is a great help to us. We have the word of God, living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, to analyse things for us, so that the result may be that we are not deceived and misled, but that we may know what our hearts are really set upon. I think, apart from this, we may often be deceived. We need the searching power of the word of God to distinguish for us what is of God and what is of ourselves. The word of God is the revelation of Himself, and of His mind and will concerning us. It is not the mere letter of scripture, which could scarcely be said to be “living.” “The letter kills” we read elsewhere (2 *Corinthians* 3:6). The word of God is the revelation of Himself to our souls. It comes with searching and distinguishing power, exposing all the movements of the flesh, all the activities of the mind of the flesh, and showing the true nature of all that is around us in this world. If we are sincerely set for reaching the purpose of God this solemn, searching process is of great value to us.

But now we have something else. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” We have not only *light*, which exposes, in the revelation of God and His mind and will, but we have *love* in a blessed Person whom we learn to love. The spring of the sympathy here spoken of is undoubtedly love. We have a beautiful expression of that sympathy in John 11 when the Lord drew near to Martha and Mary in the depth of their sorrow and wept with them. The spring of His sympathy at that time is no doubt stated in the beginning of that chapter, “Now Jesus *loved* Martha, and her sister, and

Lazarus.” He loved them, and therefore He wept with them. Now, though He has passed through the heavens, He loves His own and sympathises with us in our weakness. Thus, while we have on the one hand the exposing power of the word of God, we have on the other the attractive power of the love and sympathy of Jesus the Son of God.

The result of all this is that we leave that which is of ourselves and the world. It is exposed before our eyes and we leave it as we learn that it is no good to us. That is the one side. Then we are attracted by the love and sympathy of the great high Priest, and our hearts are irresistibly drawn to Him where He is. I think this is the means which God uses to detach us from ourselves and the world through which we go, and to attach us to the great high Priest whom we have, who has passed through the heavens, and to attach us consequently to the whole system of things which is headed up in Him. The end is that we reach Him where He is. In spite of everything that would make us tarry in this world we go after Him till we reach Him, and the purpose of God will find its fulfilment, and God will rest, and we shall share His rest.

But there is also a present end reached; we are drawn to what is spoken of in chapter 10 (*verse 19*) as the holiest. As we are drawn to Him who is the Great High Priest, we learn to enjoy, even at the present time, the deep blessedness of the rest of God. It is possible to reach the enjoyment of sonship at the present time. We can only reach it in the company of the Son of God; but if we know the full privilege of the assembly (*the church*) it is, that we are placed in living association with Him who is the Son of the Father’s love, and there in His company we taste the exceeding joy which belongs to sonship before the Father’s face.

While we are clinging to that which is of ourselves and

the world we do not taste that. We cannot take anything of the flesh or of the world into the holiest. We have to part company with all this, but we have the love of Him who sympathises with us in all our weakness, and who in so doing makes us so conscious of all that He is that we delight to be in His company.

The privilege of all that constitutes the rest of God is now laid open to us, for “Through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (*Ephesians 2:18*); and as we enter into what it is to be a heavenly band in companionship with Him we enjoy that privilege, and taste the sweetness of sonship before the Father’s face. The Father has Himself reached His rest in that blessed One who is before Him. The purpose of God is set forth in Him who has reached the heavenly place, and as we are drawn into the consciousness of association with Him we share the rest even now. The rest of God is actually future, and our present entrance into it hangs on our reaching, in the experience of our souls, association with Christ, and thus being brought to the enjoyment of all that lies in the Father’s name.

May God grant it to us, beloved friends! We need to be formed under the influence of divine love in order to appreciate the things which that love has prepared for us, and to have the enjoyment of them. While we cannot ourselves bring about the formation – we cannot make ourselves grow – yet we can seek after those things which are for the promotion of growth, while we learn increasingly to dread and shun that which is contrary. One longs that all that is set forth in Christ, along with His infinite unchanging love to us, may increasingly attract our hearts to Himself.

Address given by Joseph Revell in December, 1899, at Indianapolis.

Man and Wife

“The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant” (*Malachi 2:14*).

We learn, from the answer of our Lord to the Pharisees, that divorce was permitted to the Jew, under the Mosaic dispensation, “because of the hardness of their hearts;” but He expressly adds, “from the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19: 3-9). And the farther they departed in heart and ways from God, not only did they the more frequently avail themselves of this permission, but they also so abused it that the marriage bond became relaxed on every side, and they separated from their wives at their own will and pleasure.

This is the evil which the prophet here denounces, and from which he takes occasion to show the oneness of man and wife according to the original institution of marriage. There could be no greater evidence of moral corruption than what has been termed the levity of divorce. Even now, when a people or nation make it easy for man and wife to obtain a legal separation, it is a sure sign of the decay of public morals. And we cannot but again call attention to the order of the sins here enumerated. First, there was the corruption of the covenant of Levi, and then the dealing treacherously every man against his brother, dealing treacherously with God in the matter of idolatry, and lastly, dealing treacherously with the wife of their youth. It is religious, social, and domestic corruption; and let it be carefully observed that the last two flow from the first. The modern doctrine is that an atheist even may perform the duties of this life. It is utterly impossible; for where the conscience is not in exercise before God there is no guarantee for fidelity to man, or even, as in this scripture, to those who are united by the closest of all ties. Dissolve the tie between man and God, and you dissolve every other tie that unites man to man. These of whom the prophet speaks were the professing people of God, and were still punctilious in the observance of their sacrificial ritual, and yet they were unfaithful in every relationship in which they stood (compare Micah

7:1-6); and the flesh is the same in every age, and, though social restraints may vary in different ages, it will ever find its outlet in corrupt channels. If, therefore, there be no fear of God before the eyes of men, sin and iniquity must continually and increasingly abound.

Moreover, the object of the oneness of man and wife, the inviolability of the marriage bond (save for the one sin specified by our Lord [Matt. 19] – the sin itself being, in fact, its violation) is declared by the prophet. “And wherefore one? That He might seek a godly seed.” The Lord thus looks to find His people among the children of His servants; and it is on this account indeed that the apostle enjoins believing parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Lord’s interest in, and His care and love for the children of His people, have not been sufficiently remembered, nor that the godliness of the children – “a godly seed” – is divinely connected with the maintenance of the indissoluble sanctity of the marriage relationship. We have even further light now, because the Lord has been pleased to show us that the union of husband and wife is a figure of that between Him and the Church, and hence our responsibility is the greater, both to understand the nature of marriage, and also God’s attitude of grace and blessing towards the offspring of His saints.

Based on this revelation which God makes through Malachi is the exhortation, already enforced by these solemn considerations, “Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.” The Lord lays, in this way, great stress upon, and attaches great importance to, the godly maintenance of natural relationships [see Mark 10 on the whole subject]; and where these are slighted under whatever pretence, whether spiritual or otherwise, the door is already opened to the worst forms of licence and corruption. ... One of the plainest evidences of a desire to please the Lord is the faithful and diligent discharge of our responsibilities in the domestic circle.

From Edward Dennett’s commentary on Malachi (1893).

Ministry

God is the great minister. He serves all His creatures in their place and according to their order. He serves out the rain and sunshine and fruitful seasons, filling the heart with food and gladness. And when the need came, He spared not the Son of His love.

The Lord, the Son, is the personal or manifested minister. In every passage of His life He was the servant of man's sorrows and necessity; and though now in heaven He is still the Servant of His people's interests, and will be the Servant of their joy in the coming glory (*Luke 12:37*).

The Holy Ghost is the hidden effectual minister. He is ever tending the church, serving out to each saint the things of the Father and of Christ, and sustaining and comforting and teaching according to God and our infirmities. And thus we get a blessed display of ministry in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The angels are in ministry. "Are they are not all ministering spirits ...?" (*Hebrews 1:14*). And those of them who stand nearest the throne are perhaps the most abounding in ministry; as well they maybe from their nearness to that source of goodness. For Gabriel again and again appears in ministry; and he could say of himself as being thus very near the throne, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God" (*Luke 1:19*).

The church is in ministry, divine ministry, ministry in the grace and presence of the Spirit. And the nearer we stand to Christ, the brighter and more abundant that ministry is, as we have seen in the angels. Thus in Paul, who stood so near to Jesus, what do we see but one unbroken course of self-sacrifice and service? He is in sympathy with every infirmity of the saints. Who was offended without his burning? The care of the churches came upon him daily. If He were afflicted or comforted, it was for others. Death worked

in Him, but life in them. But every saint has some office to fill. We are all to be found in the great divine ministry of reconciliation which the Lord is now conducting in this world of sinners. If we are not ambassadors, yet we are appointed to fill some place in the great ambassador's train, if it be but in washing a saint's foot, or being in any wise a fellow-helper of the truth (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

And thus we have ministry down from God in the highest to the weakest and most distant companion in the ranks of the redeemed. And when the glory comes, where the kingdom is established, there will be ministry still. The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; the Lord of the kingdom will gird Himself and wait on His people; the water of life shall flow forth, and the leaves of the tree for healing; and the heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel (*Hosea 2:21, 22*). The less shall be blessed of the better even all through the kingdom.

J.G.Bellett (1795-1864)

POETIC PAGES

Grace

Loved into Light,
Lit into love.
Gone is the night,
light from above.
Graced by my place
In the kingdom
Of God's own Son,
Son of His love.

Loved into Life
gained by His death.
Love at its height
love at its depth,

death's sting now gone,
loved by God's Son.
Life raised with Him
everlasting.

The Father gave
the Son who died
In love that saves;
The Spirit guides.
Love, Light and Life
all that I need
in Christ supplied
by God for me!

It all goes to show
Me God is love.

John James Grayling.

He is Coming

He is coming, coming for us;
Soon we'll see His light afar,
On the dark horizon rising,
As the Bright and Morning Star,
Cheering many a waiting watcher,
As the star whose kindly ray
Heralds the approaching morning
Just before the break of day,
Oh! what joy, as night hangs round us
'Tis to think of morning's ray;
Sweet to know He's coming for us,
Just before the break of day.

/ P.T.O

He is coming as the Bridegroom,
Coming to unfold at last
The great secret of His purpose,
Mystery of ages past;
And the Bride, to her is granted
In His beauty how to shine,
As in rapture she exclaimeth
“I am His, and He is mine.”
Oh! what joy that marriage union,
Mystery of love divine;
Sweet to sing in all its fulness,
“I am His, and He is mine.”

Author unknown.

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.

