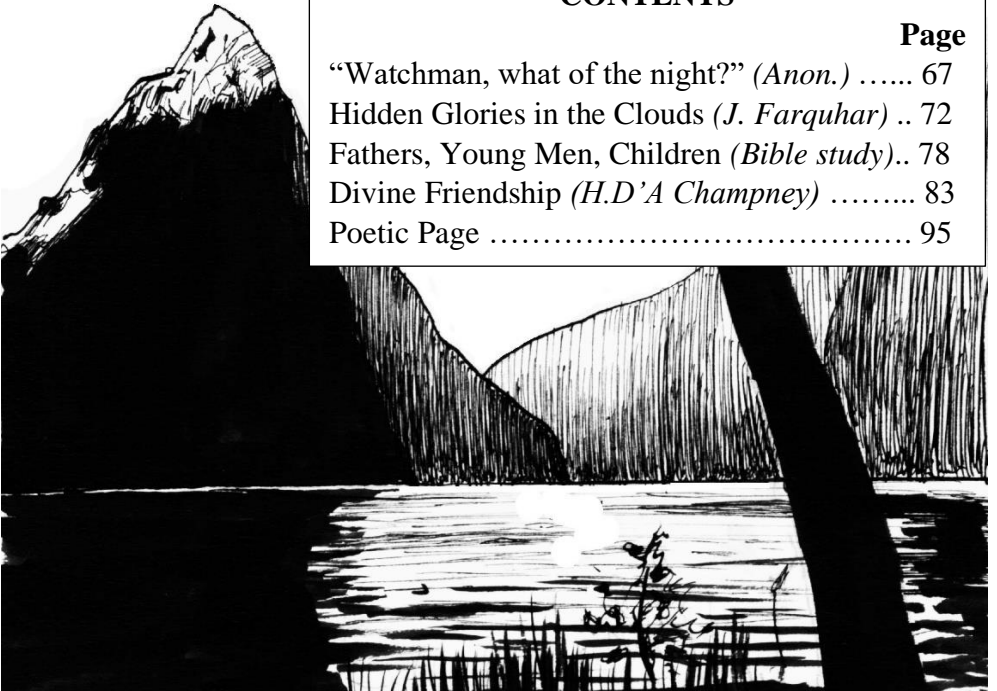


Words of Peace & Truth



No. 117: September – December 2022
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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

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

No. 117: September – December 2022

Editorial

As believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a great privilege to have the Name of Christ upon us. In the Old Testament we read that God said as to His earthly people: “And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). Similarly in New Testament times, the Name of Christ is connected with His body here on earth (1 Corinthians 12:12), which is the church. But coupled with this privilege there is responsibility.

Again as to Israel, “And all peoples of the earth shall see that thou art called by the Name of Jehovah, and they shall be afraid of thee” (Deut. 28:10). Alas, in process of time, instead of being a people that expressed the greatness and glory of God towards the other nations (Gentiles), they were the cause of His Name being profaned among them (Ezekiel 36:23). In the early days of the church it was recorded that “of the rest durst no man join them, but the people magnified them” (Acts 5:13) – such was the manifestation of the power of Christ among them. But what can we say of the picture which the church publicly presents today? Alas, the general progress of corruption is all too evident. There is, however, guidance for the believer who would be faithful to Christ: “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19). Let us remember too the exhortation of the apostle Peter that if any man suffer as a Christian, “let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:16). */continued opposite*

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Editorial (*continued*)

Since the editorial on page 66 was written, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has, at the age of 96, completed her reign. On the basis of considerable evidence, we may safely say that she is now “with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:23).

Despite the increasing secularization and ungodliness of this country there has been widespread appreciation of the outstanding way in which she conducted herself throughout her 70-year reign and many public acknowledgments of the fact that this sprang from her firm faith in Christ. Surely we can be very thankful to God for such testimonies and pray that He will use them to bring many to “the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). The passing of the Queen, however, may represent the removal of part of “what withholdeth” (KJV) or “that which restrains” (Darby Trans.). Let us pray that King Charles III will be helped to do what is right; also that others, emboldened by the testimonies to our late Queen, will unashamedly confess their faith in Christ. G.S.B.

WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

Isaiah 21:11,12

Here and there in Scripture we find different minds brought into contact with the same moral perplexity – for instance, *the prosperity of the wicked* – and we see the different ways in which this perplexity was dealt with.

Jeremiah took it at once to God, as a thing too hard for himself. This was dealing rightly and religiously with it. (See Jer. 12.)

Asaph was overwhelmed by it, and spoke impatiently under it. His soul, however, was sweetly restored at the last. (See Psalm 73.)

Ecclesiastes contemplates the wicked taking advantage of God's long-suffering, or delay, in judging the works of iniquity, leaving man still to prosper in his wickedness. (See Eccl. 8:11.)

Malachi speaks of a generation who exceed even this, challenging the God of judgment because of this same thing, the prosperity of the wicked. (See Mal. 2:17; 3:14, 15.)

These are instances of what I mean; the same moral perplexity differently dealt with by different minds. But this last case from Malachi shows exceeding wickedness. Judgment is scoffed at; the thought of it, as it were, ridiculed, because evil doers were still prospering – and this naturally introduces us to a meditation on Isaiah 21:11, 12.

Dumah or Idumaea, the land of Esau, was the land of the profane one, the man of the world, the infidel. The voice of the scorner is heard in that land. It challenges one of God's watchmen, asking, "What of the night?"

This tells us that that watchman had been already talking of the night. And this evidences his faithfulness to his commission; for a part of our testimony, under the Spirit, is to "the night," the present night-time of man's world, or the coming solemn, dark, night-time of God's judgments. The very challenge of the profane Edomite, I say, evidences that the watchman had been faithful, that he both understood and discharged his ministry. Prophets and apostles largely tell us of "the night." They speak abundantly of judgment preceding and introducing the kingdom or the age of glory: and the watchman here challenged had been in their company, in 'the goodly fellowship of the prophets.' And he is not one who has to recall his words. Having already spoken of the night, he still speaks of it; for in answer to the challenge he says, "the morning cometh and also the night." He can talk of "the morning," it is true, but he will not refuse to tell of "the night" also, however the thought of

it may be scorned. Glory in the time of the Lord's presence, or in the morning of His appearing, will come; but the dark, solemn season of judgment must go before it, as all the prophets witness. This is the watchman's *faithfulness*. He maintains his testimony to "the night," though telling of "the morning" likewise. He declares that judgment is coming, as well as the kingdom in its glory. But there must be *grace* as well as faithfulness in the watchman's ministry; he therefore has a word for the scorner's conscience. It could not satisfy him to tell of the terrors of judgment without some seasonable word of warning, some seeking to "persuade men," as the apostle says (2 Corinthians 5:11). Accordingly he adds here, in answer to the Edomite's challenge, "If ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." He warns the scoffer to be of another mind; and if he enquire at all, to enquire in a due spirit, a spirit of repentance; to "return" from his mocking of God's servant and his testimony, and to "come" in a believing, worshipping mind to lay his question before the Lord.

All this constitutes something beautiful. This combination of faithfulness and grace gives us a fine sample, though so short and small, of the ministry of all watchmen under the Spirit of God; He insists on the truth of God, and will not qualify it, but seeks likewise to press it on the acceptance of the conscience of sinners.

Now, 2 Peter 3 is called to mind by this short, impressive oracle on Dumah in Isaiah 21. For in that chapter we listen to the voice of a scoffer again, and again get the answer of the Spirit of God. The scoffer challenges the promise of the Lord's coming. And this evidences that such a promise had been part of the previous testimony – just, as I was observing, the challenge of the Edomite in Isaiah 21 evidenced that the watchman had been already talking of the night. And the scoffer here would make good his challenge by a fair piece of

reasoning, as it is judged to be: "Where is the promise of His coming?" he tauntingly asks; and then he says, "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." They dispute with the mystery of the Lord's coming on the supposed authority of the general course of nature, and of natural events; and all this is in the spirit of "Watchman, what of the night?"

The apostle answers. He lets this scorner know that things from the beginning of the creation (as the scorner himself had spoken) had taken their course, not by mere force of cause and effect, and established laws and analogies, but that all, in successive ages, had depended on divine good pleasure or the word of God; that by that word, the heavens were of old and the earth also; that by the same word the flood had come; and that similarly we have now another heaven and earth which awaits its doom by fire at the pleasure of the same word of God.

This is a fine answer from this New Testament watchman to the Edomite of this day. And having done this, he turns to give exhortations to the saints, on the ground of coming judgment and coming glory; that is, on the ground of "the night" and "the morning" of the prophet. And he would fain have them "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" and hold to their steadfastness of faith and hope in the midst of the reasonings of the scoffers. And further, he would have them able to interpret the delay of this coming which the scoffers were rebuking, and resolve it into the most blessed and gracious of all purposes, the salvation of God: "account that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3:15).

I do indeed read this chapter from Peter as a fine New Testament Scripture in connection with the oracle of Isaiah over the land of Edom. The scoffer of the last days of

Christendom is found in company with the profane Edomite in the days of the kings of Israel. And I ask, is not the present, among other characters which it bears, a day of Edomite profaneness and scorning, and a day when the Lord's watchmen, like Isaiah and like Peter, should know what to do and how to answer? Surely this is so. Who can mistake it? Present times are full of meaning. Political revolutions and Christian activities are giving them a character which is far out of the common.

In the Lord's dealings with the earth, it has always been "the night" and "the morning" – the morning of glory or the day of the kingdom, and the night of judgment clearing the way and cleansing the scene.

In Noah's time this was so – the judgment by the deluge went forth and did its work, and then the new world shone out. The sword of Joshua judged the nations of Canaan, and then the land was divided among the tribes, and the glory seated itself there. David's victories cleared the way for the throne of Solomon. And so with the world or the earth now. Night is in the prospect, the Apocalyptic night – the judgments, whether under seals, trumpets, or vials, which the Apocalypse (*the Book of Revelation*) discloses. And morning is likewise in the prospect, the Apocalyptic morning – the kingdom where the saints shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years; and the bride (*the church*) in her beauty shall descend, having the glory of God in her (*Revelation 21:10, 11*). So that if any enquire, "What of the night?" as far as the future of *the earth* is concerned, the answer still is, "The morning cometh and also the night."

Author unknown; reproduced from "The Remembrancer," 1902, slightly edited.

HIDDEN GLORIES IN THE CLOUDS

The first token that we get mentioned in Scripture as given by God to men is a “bow in the cloud” (Genesis 9:13, 14). “And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud ... And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it.” It appeared when Noah had come through the dark waters of judgment.

How very beautiful it is for us to contemplate. God has Christ before Him in all His varied glories in the colours of the bow in the cloud, and He establishes His covenant with men. “This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between Me and all flesh.”

Just think what He has established for us in the resurrection glory of the risen Christ. The cloud would be “over the earth.” All flesh and the whole of creation come under the good of it. His “faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds” (Psalm 36:5). “Seed time and harvest ... shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). While time lasts the good seed will be sown, and there will be a harvest for God in the going out of the gospel, so our blessed Lord encourages us to pray for more labourers, for the fields are white unto harvest (Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:2; John 4:35).

The bow is seen in the cloud and God’s eye rests upon it and He remembers His “everlasting covenant,” which is sure; there can be no breakdown in it. What rest and peace it would bring to our hearts if we by grace realise it in any little measure.

It is God’s covenant with man, not man’s with God. How well He has kept it! The bow has ever since been in the cloud and it is a well-known fact that at all times over some part of the earth the bow is seen.

Now in Exodus 13:21 the cloud appears again, this time

as the cloud of guidance: “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud.” This cloud appears as Israel comes up out of Egypt, as the cloud appeared to Noah when he came out of the waters of judgment. “The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud.” So the Lord was in this cloud, as the bow was in the cloud of which God spoke to Noah. “He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

And it is most interesting to notice that when Israel refused to go into the promised land (Numbers 14), God was angry with them and would have cut them off for their unbelief, but Moses interceded for them. He prayed to the Lord: “Then the Egyptians shall hear it ... And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that Thou, Lord, art among this people, and that Thou, Lord, art seen face to face; and that **Thy cloud** standeth over them; and that Thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night” (Numbers 14:13, 14). So the Lord answered his prayer, pardoned and took not away His cloud, although that generation could not go into the promised land.

How faithful He is! It was there day and night for forty years – the cloud to guide them in spite of all their failures, murmurings and breakdowns; it was never taken away throughout the whole journey. Just think of His mercy and grace!

See Exodus 14:19: here we see the cloud of protection and separation. We need both for the journey through the wilderness. The Egyptians were following them but the cloud intervened, “so that the one came not near the other all the night.” During the dark hours through which we may be called to pass, the enemy cannot come near us in the way the Egyptians endeavoured to come near Israel, for the Lord was in the cloud that was between them.

Paul mentions the same cloud (1 Corinthians 10:1): “I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers **were under** the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” – not only in the sea but in the cloud; separation from the world and protection from the enemy. How one would covet to be truer to this.

Let us always remember that the Lord is in the cloud, so we need not be afraid to follow. Even in the sea we shall find dry land, and our hearts prepared for a song on the other side of it.

In the days of Nehemiah, the time of recovery of things for God, the prophet reminds them (chapter 9, verse 19) how God in mercy forsook them not in the wilderness. “The pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go.” He takes them right back to the start of the journey, reminds them of the cloud, and in memory brings them again through the wilderness. It is well also for us to go back in spirit to the beginning in this way, and go over it all from God’s side, and what He has done for us as well as for Israel.

In Exodus 40:34 we find that “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” Here we see the cloud of His presence; it appeared when the tabernacle was finished and set up. They did not journey while the cloud was over the tabernacle; in God’s presence there is perfect rest. It was a wonderful sight for them to look upon; by day and by night it could be seen. What comfort and rest it must have given to their hearts when they looked at it. The Lord was in their midst. Earlier, after the idolatry of the golden calf, Moses had pitched the tent of meeting outside the camp and the cloud descended upon it

(Exodus 33:9). The Lord came down in the cloudy pillar, which stood at the door of this tabernacle, and said (verse 14) “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Moses responds to this in a wonderful way; his heart’s desire was to see the glory of the One who brought him rest. May his desire be ours also.

See also 1 Kings 8: 10, 11. The cloud appeared again when the temple was finished, as it had done when the tabernacle was completed and set up. We read “that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD” – no room for ministry, just praise and worship, when the glory of the Lord fills the scene.

He is supreme, and there is no room for anything else; this is open to us. When He would come to us and His glory fill every heart, the cloud of glory ‘fills the temple’ and all bow down before Him in adoration and praise. He would lead us into it. May we enter into it more than we ever have done.

Again, in 1 Kings 18:44 we see “a little cloud.” Elijah “said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ And he went up, and looked, and said, ‘There is nothing.’” How often we look (at the Scriptures, maybe) and see nothing. But Elijah tells him to go again, even seven times – a perfect number – and the seventh time he saw “a little cloud” arising out of the sea “like a man’s hand.” Here we see the cloud of blessing, for much rain was to fall upon a parched and thirsty land; there was to be abundance of rain.

The blessing came from a cloud “like a man’s hand.” We might well ask, what man? – whose hand? Doubtless it speaks to us of the hands of our blessed Lord. Just think for a moment what blessing came from His hand! – cleansing for the leper, sight to the blind, life to the dead, food for the hungry, living

waters for the thirsty, joy for the sorrowing, tears turned into smiles of joy, rest for the weary, etc. Everything His hands touched, there was blessing in abundance. Where there was need, His hands brought a full supply.

“And those kind hands that did such good
They nailed them to a cross of wood!”

Yes, nailed to the cross, but look at the result – blessing in abundance! Who could tell the magnitude of the blessings that come from His hands? We are reminded of Joseph, who left off counting the corn when he gathered it in, there was such an abundant supply (Genesis 41:49).

The Lord’s Supper, too, comes from His hands with all its blessed memories of His love. In resurrection He showed His hands to His disciples. When He ascended on high He lifted them up in blessing for them and for us.

Oh, blessed wonderful hands! What an ocean of blessing there is in a little cloud that arose out of the sea. We think of Christ coming up out of death; “He arose” (Acts 10:41). What a theme of adoration opens up for our hearts to ponder, and I trust to respond to.

Then in Luke 9:34 appears the cloud of glory: “While he thus spoke, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My Beloved Son: hear Him.’” Just previously we read: “As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease [*or ‘departure’*] which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

What a subject to talk about while “in glory”! He was

coming down out of that cloud of glory to Calvary's cross of shame to "accomplish" everything for God's glory and our eternal blessing. Peter, James and John feared as they entered into the cloud. There was nothing to fear, for God was there "in the cloud." The Lord was there, and in such company there is no need to fear. The cloud "overshadowed them" as it had done the children of Israel.

"They saw His glory;" we shall see it soon and not be afraid. And He will never leave it again, for then everything will have been accomplished.

In Acts 1:9 the cloud of His ascension appears. "When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Then we (*by faith*) see Him beyond the cloud, going in, as we read in Psalm 24: "the King of glory shall come in." And He sits at the right hand of God now, the Man of patience, waiting the word from the Father to return in the cloud and call us away, for "then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them (*the dead in Christ who have been raised*) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The cloud of His coming (*see Acts 1:11*) – what a moment it will be for us! But just think what it will be to Him. Have we not lost sight of it, and so missed the joy and comfort of His return? May our hearts be stirred up afresh to respond to His desire and say "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (*Revelation 22:20*).

In Revelation 14:14 we find a cloud of judgment. John writes of his vision: "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man." Here He comes to judge and thrusts in His sickle (a sharp one). The world will know it, for the harvest of the earth is ripe, ripe for judgment. "And the earth was reaped." Everything not fit for

His kingdom is removed. The reaper has a gold crown on his head, so we know who He is; and we know that the Judge of all the earth will do right (Genesis 18:25). He is “the Righteous Judge” (2 Timothy 4:8). How sad it would be to meet Him in judgment! A white cloud leads later to “a great white throne” (Revelation 20:11).

By simple faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary’s cross, you may at this moment come under the cloud of blessing, and so escape the judgment of the great white throne.

From notes of an address by J.H. Farquhar; date uncertain but certainly before the Second World War as the notes were published by G. Morrish when that firm was based at 20, Paternoster Square, which was demolished during the blitz.

FATHERS, YOUNG MEN AND CHILDREN

1 John 2:12-29

The apostle John addresses his readers as “children.” They were in the family of God – or took that place. In his Gospel he tells us how we become children of God: “but as many received Him, to them gave He the right to be children of God, to those that believe on His name; who have been born, not of blood nor of flesh’s will nor of man’s will, but of God.” (John 1, vv. 12, 13). But John – probably an old man when writing this epistle and a father in the faith – also regarded them as *his* children (see verse 1). What a need there is today of spiritual fathers for those who are younger in faith! Paul said, “not many fathers” (1 Corinthians 4:15).

It seems that verse 12 is addressed to all the children of God but then the apostle proceeds to address the different stages of growth, beginning with the fathers, who had “known Him that is from the beginning.” We take this to be a reference to the Lord

Jesus, the “beginning” in this epistle meaning the beginning of Christianity as described in the opening verses of chapter 1. (Whereas “the beginning” in chapter 1 of the Gospel goes back before creation.)

It is evident that John wrote this epistle when many evils were affecting the church – we understand that Judaism, Gnosticism and Platonism were all circulating – and he stresses the need to stay with what was revealed and taught at the outset. Christianity does not require further development! “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come” (Hebrews 13:8). The fathers are credited with acquaintance with Christ. Indeed, in his second series of messages to the three classes, beginning “I have written to you ...,” John has nothing more to add as far as the fathers are concerned but simply repeats “ye have known Him that is from the beginning.” This suggests that a mature appreciation of Christ and occupation with Him are sufficient to sustain us in all that is right.

The young men had overcome the wicked one, no doubt a reference to the tempter, Satan. They had been enabled to do this because the word of God abode (dwelt) in them. We are exhorted by Paul to “let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). We need not simply to be able to recall a few favourite verses but to think in terms of Scripture and have it rule our hearts and minds.

But the young men needed to be warned not to love the world – the system built up by Satan to divert us from the things of God. John shows us that the same elements that Satan used to deceive Eve in the garden of Eden are still the principles of the present evil world – the lust of the flesh (“the woman saw that the tree was good for food”), the lust of the eyes (“it was a pleasure for the eyes”) and the pride of life (“the tree was desired to give intelligence”) – see

Genesis 3:6. The Devil tried to use the same things in the recorded temptations of Christ – turning the stone into bread, desiring the kingdoms of the world and casting Himself down from the edge of the temple – but He was not moved by any of them (Luke 4:1-13).

John is uncompromising in the way he writes: “If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. The Lord Jesus was able to say, on leaving His disciples, “Be of good courage: I have overcome the world” (John 16:33), and He will help *us* to overcome it too. Another has said that this means that *it* does not overcome *you*.

Then John addresses the little children. It is to be noted that the word translated “children” in verses 1, 12 and 28 (“little children” in the King James Version) is applied to all believers but in verses 13 and 18 a different word is used (rendered “little children” in the Darby Translation), implying an early stage of spiritual growth – those young in faith. It is remarkable that John speaks of the fathers as knowing Christ but of the little children as knowing the Father. It is indeed true that the youngest babe in Christ is able to have confidence in God known as Father.

From verse 18 the apostle addresses the little children at length in relation to the dangers of “the last hour” and the protection against these. “The last hour” clearly means the time when, in advance of *the* Antichrist appearing (see 2 Thessalonians 2: 3, 4 and Revelation 13:11 *et seq*), the *spirit* of antichrist is abroad. The “many antichrists” had gone out “from among us,” as Judas had gone out from the presence of the Lord and of His disciples (John 13:30). So today, alas, we are witnessing men and women who profess to be Christians and who take positions of leadership turning away from the truth and advocating teachings and practices utterly against the word of God. John says of such, “they were not of us.”

The little children, however, are addressed as true believers, having “the unction from the Holy One.” They may not have great knowledge but they have an intuitive sense of what is the truth by the Holy Spirit whom they have received from Christ (see John 15:26), here described as “the Holy One.” It is noteworthy that in John 6:69 the Lord Jesus is addressed by Peter as “the Holy One of God” (Darby translation, ESV and NIV). He presents Himself to the assembly in Philadelphia as “the Holy, the True” (Rev. 3:7).

Those marked by the spirit of antichrist spread lies, the principal lie being that Jesus is not the Christ. The Jews (as a nation) would not receive Jesus as their Messiah (John 5:43) but a godly remnant of Israel from which a new nation will be formed will, after the church has been taken up to glory, realise that, after all, Jesus is the Christ, the true Messiah; see Isaiah 53:4-6 and Zechariah 12:10. The Gnostics denied that the holy God could be present in flesh; they were perhaps in the apostle’s mind when he wrote about those who did not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh; see chapter 5, verse 3. Then he also writes that “he is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (ch. 2, v. 22). John shows us in his gospel and epistles that the relationship of the Father and the Son lies at the very heart of Christianity. This was the truth that the Jews opposed when Christ was here; see, for example, John 10:30-33. And this very epistle opens with the subject of “the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us” – manifested in the One whom the apostles had heard, seen, contemplated and handled – and their fellowship “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

The Antichrist is not only an opposer of Christ but he presumes to take His place. It was no doubt to him that the Lord referred when He said: “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43). The Lord Jesus was “a Man borne witness to

by God to you by works of power and wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22) and in Revelation 13 we read that the Antichrist will work great signs to deceive those that dwell upon the earth (verses 13 and 14).

John tells the little children that their protection against the errors and deceptions that were already abroad was to “let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you.” Thus they would “abide in the Son and in the Father.” Further, following the unction to which he had already referred would prevent them from being deceived and led astray. This unction – the action of the Holy Spirit in them – would cause them to abide in Christ. The Spirit’s service to us is always to glorify Christ to us; see John 16:14.

Then John again addresses us all (verse 28) and exhorts us all to abide in Christ, that we may have boldness when He is manifested. The way in which the planets keep in their orbits around the sun may serve as an illustration of what abiding in Christ means – that we are kept in relation to Him and continually under His influence and regulation. This is how we will not be “put to shame before Him at His coming.” In writing this John may possibly have had in mind the apostles’ special responsibility for the saints, their condition reflecting on their own service. Paul seems, in a positive way, to recognise this principle in 1 Thessalonians 2:19 and 20. But if an apostle could envisage the possibility of shame (perhaps just a tinge? – certainly not punishment!) at the Lord’s coming, how much more should we ordinary folk seek to be free from anything on which our Lord cannot look with pleasure. The answer surely lies in having the word of God dwell in us, in following the unction given to us through the Holy Spirit and in abiding in Christ.

Based on Bible readings held in Coulsdon, August 2022.

DIVINE FRIENDSHIP

John 15:12-16; 16:26,27.

I THINK we find in these last words one of the sweetest thoughts ever uttered by our Lord Jesus in His ministry. They were uttered just before His death. Immediately afterwards we find Him praying the Father for them; then comes His arrest, followed by His trial, and then He goes out of this world to the Father through death and resurrection. What a wonderful word to close His ministry with – “I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me.” He evidently did not mean that He would not Himself pray for them, for He prayed for them immediately afterwards (chap. 17), but that they themselves were to have this privilege because the Father loved them. The word for love here is very striking. It is not the usual word used for love in John’s writings. It indicates the love of friendship and attachment. It is as if He had said: **THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVETH YOU WITH THE LOVE OF INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO ME. YOU HAVE LOVED ME AS MY INTIMATE FRIENDS.** But for these faithful disciples and the holy women who followed Him, **JESUS WOULD HAVE BEEN WITHOUT A FRIEND IN THE WORLD.** He did more good than any one ever known, and brought a love to man never seen before, and yet after having cured “all that were sick” we find Him saying: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20). Men received His benefactions, but they did not want the Benefactor, and after all His kindnesses He had nowhere to lay His head. The cities remained as they were in their sinfulness and unrepentant condition. They did not turn to God, nor seek the company of Him Who brought God to man.

Piety found its true home in Christ. Consequently sinful and wilful people did not care to be near Him. His presence was too much for them. The presence of a godly man annoys others. Godliness is very isolating. So Christ was left alone, and had nowhere to lay His head. The rulers came down from Jerusalem to examine Him, and declared that He did His work through Beelzebub, and the world cavilled and sneered at Him, as they do now.

It was at that moment that THE FATHER GAVE HIM FRIENDS. He gave Him the poor of the earth but rich in faith and full of love to Him. They were chiefly fishermen and humble Galilean women. But they became attached to Him and loved Him with the love of intimate friendship. Not only men but also women were attached to Him, and with divinely given intuition they found many precious ways of serving Him and of proving their friendship. They ministered to Him of their substance. Martha opened her house to Him. Mary came with her alabaster box of precious ointment just when the hatred of men rose to its height and when treachery broke out in His nearest surroundings, and by pouring it over Jesus showed how she valued Him and appreciated His love. Thus she had the privilege of comforting Jesus just when comfort was most acceptable. Nor did Jesus complain that the Father had given Him the poor and not the chief priests or rulers or rabbis. If these had come to Him they would have needed grace to drop the chief priest or ruler or rabbi before they could have become real friends for the meek and lowly Jesus. The High Priest, if he had come, would have had to own that the Urim and Thummim* were with Jesus and not with the High Priest, for Jesus alone could reveal the mind of God. No, it mattered not

**Meaning "lights and perfections;" see Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21, etc.*

to Jesus that His circle of friends were chiefly the poor; they had less to unlearn, and CHRIST COULD DO QUITE AS MUCH WITH THE POOR AND UNLETTERED AS WITH THE RICH AND GREAT. He could put His own grace into them and give them all the ability and competency they needed. He could make of them just what He wanted, and He gladly received them as His friends. John uses two different words for love in speaking of the Father and the Son. In ch. 3, v. 35, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand,” the word signifies THE LOVE OF THE DIVINE NATURE, the love which is proper to divine Persons. The same word is used when speaking of the love of Christ to His own and of the love of Christians to one another, for as born of God they partake of a new nature, a divine nature which is characterized by love, a love which never fails.

But it is the other word for love I want to speak about, the word we get in ch. 5, v. 20: “The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.” Here the word signifies THE LOVE OF FRIENDSHIP. ‘The Father is attached to the Son,’ or loves Him with the love of an intimate friend, as we see in the next clause: “and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth,” for He was His Friend.

But the amazing thing is this: THE FATHER INCLUDES IN HIS FRIENDSHIP THE FRIENDS OF HIS SON. The Father saw how the disciples befriended His Son in this chilly world, and He took them into His friendship and circle of love, and so He does still.

The Lord does not say: ‘The Father Himself loveth you because I have loved you,’ but “because you have loved Me.” “You have been attached to Me,” ‘You have loved Me with the love of friendship.’ He owns the love the disciples had shown Him, and how they had come round Him as friends when otherwise He would have been alone. It is true that

THEY DID NOT CHOOSE CHRIST, BUT CHRIST CHOSE THEM (ch. 15, v. 16), and we know that those whom He chose were drawn to Him and given to Him of the Father (*ch. 6:44 and 17:6*), yet the Lord loved to look upon His disciples as those who had befriended Him in a world that hated Him, and who loved Him with a true and intimate love.

THE PRESENT IS A GRAND OPPORTUNITY OF SHOWING OUR FRIENDSHIP TO CHRIST AND OF ATTACHING OURSELVES TO HIM. You may say: How can we do this, seeing that Christ is no longer in Galilee but has gone to the right hand of God? But if we own the friends of Christ and attach ourselves to them just because they are His friends, He will take it as done to Himself. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (*Matthew 25:30*). Christ is more usually found amongst the very poor and amongst those of no account in this world. We prove our love to Christ by the way we love such, even if they are found in a garret (*a room in an attic – Ed.*) and in the poorest condition of life. If their spirit is the spirit of Christ, then if we love Christ we shall love them. They are evidently the friends of Christ, for HIS FRIENDS ARE KNOWN BY THEIR LIKENESS TO HIM; and surely if they are counted worthy to be the friends of Christ, they are worthy to be our friends. Though Christ is personally in heaven, yet He is morally here in those who have His Spirit and breathe His Spirit in their life and walk down here. Thus we have a golden opportunity of proving our love to Christ by the way we show our friendship to those who, no matter how humble and lowly, are characterized by Christ.

And here I would say how important it is to show that we *are* Christ’s, and that we love Christ, and are happy in the company of Christ. If I show that I am far more at home amongst my neighbours who know not Christ or amongst the

ungodly people where I work than I am in the company of the Lord's people, I could hardly expect the love of friendship from those who are attached to Christ, however much they might pray for me. If they walked with me when thus careless and worldly, they would soon be as worldly as myself, and they would themselves lose the friendship of Christ. We read, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God," and "Whosoever therefore will be (that is, desires to be) a friend of the world is THE ENEMY OF GOD" (*James 4:4*). What a striking contrast this is to being THE FRIENDS OF THE FATHER, as we are permitted in grace to be if we prove ourselves the friends of Christ in a world that has cast Him out, a world that despises those who walk in His steps and manifest His Spirit. More serious still is the word, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ" (that is, with the love of friendship), "let him be Anathema Maran-atha" (*1 Corinthians 16:22*). A real curse or Anathema belongs to such, and will be executed soon, for "Our Lord cometh," as the word Maran-atha signifies. What an awful thing it would be when Christ comes for His friends, and they are caught up to meet Him in the air, if any of us are left behind for the judgments coming on the earth, and that, because we loved the friendship of the world and despised the friendship of Christ! Do we blush when His Name is spoken of in the world; are we ashamed to own Him, or to be seen walking with the poor who love Him? Let us take care lest He refuses to own us as His friends when He comes to take them to Himself. Men glory in being connected with some great personage in this world, or in being his intimate friends. Do we glory in being the friends of Jesus? Are we proud of Him or are we ashamed of His Name? JESUS WILL HAVE THE SAME FRIENDS IN GLORY THAT HE HAS IN THIS DAY OF HIS REPROACH. He will soon come and take up His rights and reign over all the nations. He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords, and He will come with a BRILLIANT

ESCORT, with an intimate circle of honoured friends, but they will be **THE FRIENDS THAT SURROUNDED HIM IN THE DAY OF HIS SHAME**. It is a costly friendship now, for it means the scorn of the world, but we shall be amply rewarded in the day of His glory. The sweetest thing on earth is intimacy with Christ, the friendship of Christ. Now is the time for showing love to Jesus, when most show Him hatred or indifference. He will have plenty of love in the day of glory ; it is now that He needs it and loves to have it, when but for His friends no one would love Him in this world at all. The greatest honour we could have on earth is to be known as the friends of Jesus, and that because we love His own, however poor, and are not ashamed to walk with them if they walk in truth. We love their society just because they love Him. We drop the social, the society of this world, and own **THE NEW SOCIETY** which the Holy Ghost has been forming now for 1900 (*now nearly 2000 – Ed.*) years, that of the friends of Jesus. If we cannot walk with Jesus in Galilee as in days when He was on the earth, we can change our circle of friends and walk with the friends of Christ and enjoy that society which knows no death, and be in a friendship which is eternal. If we do so, the world will isolate us, but Christ will own us, and so will all who love Him.

In a day of trial like the present, and in times of pressure, a true friendship is invaluable, and where can we find it except amongst those who love Christ and surround Him day by day? How needful too to strengthen the friendship by being careful to cherish the love of Christ and to allow nothing to come in to hinder the friendship, or to bring in grit and ill-feeling amongst the friends. There is great need of the binding power of cement, **THE CEMENT OF DIVINE LOVE**. If we remove the cement, the structure will fall. It is a poor thing to be found quarrelling and backbiting or to be envious and jealous of one another; it is like taking the cement away from the wall. It

leads to break-up and trouble. Love cements.

THE HOLY GHOST IS THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP. He cements us to Christ and to one another and forms a bond that cannot be broken in spite of Satan's continual efforts to break up the friendship. Thus we have A TRIPLE FRIENDSHIP – that of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Who, dwelling in believers and binding us together, forms THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE SPIRIT, a friendship which is unchanging and eternal.

CHRIST NEVER LOST A FRIEND. His love was such that He could not let them go, though they often failed, and had to be rebuked for their quarrelling. They were rebuked in love, and so were never lost. “Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none is lost ...” (*John 17:12*). “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations” (*Luke 22:28*). Judas was never a friend, and the Lord never called him a friend. In the passage, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” it should be translated ‘companion.’* Judas was never attached to Jesus with the love of a friend. He was the friend of money, not of Jesus. He might pass as a friend, so that the psalmist could prophetically speak of him as “mine own familiar friend (lit., “the man of my peace”), in whom I trusted” (*Psalms 41:9*). But Jesus was never deceived as to him. Long before His death Jesus said: “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (*John 6:70*). The Lord waited till Judas had gone out, and then He said to His dear disciples : “YE ARE MY FRIENDS ... I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS” (*John 15:14, 15*). What an honour to be called the friends of Jesus! May we prove ourselves worthy of the name. Christ

**I think we are taken up on the ground we profess. Judas took the place of being a friend or companion of Christ and was addressed accordingly – Editor.*

might treat Judas, or any other professor, “as though he had been my friend or brother” (Psalm 35:14), but He is never deceived. He knows all who are true, and He knows “who will betray Him,” and so should we in measure, if we were in the power of His Spirit.

Surely the greatest conceivable honour in this world is to be the friends of Christ, and remember, HIS FRIENDS IN THIS WORLD WILL BE HIS FRIENDS IN THE NEXT. He will never change His friends. His friends in distress are His friends in glory. They will all be there to a man, for HE HAS SECURED HIS FRIENDS AT THE COST OF HIS LIFE. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends” (*John 15:13*). To make certain of having us, He died for us! What a lesson for us to die for our friends rather than lose them, no matter how perverse and self-willed they at times may seem to be.

It is beautiful that He should call us friends, but we must not forget that HE WAS THE FIRST TO LOVE. We should never have loved if He had not “first loved us.” Where, indeed, should we have been if He had not loved us, and proved Himself to us THE FRIEND OF FRIENDS and pre-eminent in love?

How beautifully this is set forth in the Lord’s Supper, THE SUPPER OF FRIENDSHIP! There we call Him to mind in the breaking of the bread and recall how He gave His life for His friends. There we, as it were, declare our fidelity to Him and to His friends with whom we break bread, THE FRIENDS OF THE TESTIMONY, and we renew or strengthen the bonds of friendship by fresh thoughts of His love in dying for us, and so get drawn more closely in love to those for whom He died.

Another way He proves His friendship is that HE

CONFIDES IN HIS FRIENDS. "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Christ keeps nothing back from His friends; He opens out all the secrets of divine counsels, and of the Father's love. Whatever the Father gave Him for man, He made known to His friends. Thus He proved that He really counted them as His friends. He did not doubt them. He trusted them. LOVE IS NOT SUSPICIOUS. He knew their love and trusted it.

This brings me to notice that CHRIST'S FRIENDS ARE UNDER HIS COMMANDING INFLUENCE. As He says: "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." It is so in the world. The student is commanded by his professor, he is full of him, adopts his thoughts, his ways, his manner of life; he thinks there is no one like him. So with the soldier: he is commanded by his general, he glories in him, carries out his orders, is inspired by him. The socialist is commanded by his leader, he believes in him, follows him. How much more should it be so with the friends of Christ? Yea, it is so, or they would not be His friends. His friends are known by the way they adopt the ways of Christ, walk in His steps, breathe His Spirit. They do not take up the slang of the world, they speak like Christ; they do not live in evil, for Christ did not. They do not hate, for Christ never hated. They love, for Christ loved. They do good, for Christ did good. They fear God, for Christ did. They keep separate from the world, for Christ was separate. He was not of the world. They love the friends, for Christ loved them and served them. Christ did not doubt the friendship of His disciples; He delighted in it, but in saying "If ye do whatsoever I command you," He showed them the holy lines on which they alone could prove themselves His friends. True friendship, it has been said, consists in having the same likes and dislikes, and so it is in Christianity. If we let our mind roam in evil and delight in pride and worldliness, where is the friendship of Christ? If we harbour unkind thoughts against

our brethren, where is true friendship? If we are overbearing and self-important, what is there friendly in that? If we want to distinguish ourselves by our learning or in any other way, we hinder the friendship. The friends rise above all the distinctions you find in the world, and learn to love as friends, as Christ loved us. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” Commanded by His love we love one another. A FRIEND IS GREATER THAN A PREACHER, though of course one would expect that the preacher of Christ would be also a friend of Christ; but he might be self-important or overbearing, and in that measure hinder or even deny the friendship. The friendship of a brother in Christ is far beyond the friendship of a natural brother who knows not Christ. The latter may be no brother at all, but live in hatred. In the friendship of Christ we rise above all distinctions of nature and of home into THE FRIENDSHIP OF ETERNITY.

No one was ever so lonely in this world as Christ. He had no home here, but He had His friends, and HIS FRIENDS WERE HIS HOME. He dwelt amongst those who loved Him. It is so still; the only place for Christ to-day is THE HOME OF DIVINE FRIENDSHIP where He is loved and where His commandments are kept. The Spirit is ever leading true souls into that Home. Properly it belongs to heaven, but actually His friends are still here on earth united into one body by the one Spirit. They will soon be translated to glory. The Lord is drawing His friends closer together, and the world is drawing its own together into godless associations where Christ is not. When THE FRIENDSHIP IS RIPE FOR GLORY, the Lord will come and take His friends to Himself and into the proper Home of Divine Friendship – the Father's House. How soon we may be there!

THE FRIENDS ARE WELL KNOWN IN HEAVEN and

should know one another on earth. “Greet the friends by name” (3 *John 14*) shows they are distinguished. Diotrophes was not a friend, for he loved to have the pre-eminence in the Assembly and cast the brethren out. How different from the Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved with divine love (John 21:7) and with the love of friendship (ch. 20, v. 2). Lazarus also was so loved (ch. 11, vv. 3, 5). Peter also, when twice challenged by Christ as to his love, replies each time: ‘Thou knowest that I love Thee as a friend’ (or, “I am attached to Thee”), using not the word which Christ used for love, but the word for friendship. Whereupon Jesus uses Peter’s word the third time; “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me (as a friend)”? to which he replied with sorrow that he should have been apparently doubted: “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee,” and still clings to his own word indicating the love of an intimate friend. And it was true. The matter of his denying Him with oaths and curses was only a sad incident in his pathway; it was not his characteristic. His characteristic was that he was a friend of Jesus. Jesus knew it and had only questioned him that he might thoroughly judge his failure, and then He trusts him with the feeding of the flock so precious to Christ. Jesus knew His friend and trusted him.

How blessed then to be recognized as the friends of Christ, and, as being attached to Him, to be **THE FRIENDS OF THE FATHER!** He loves us and counts us in the circle of His friends because of our attachment to Christ. No words can express the value of the Father’s friendship.

THE FATHER LISTENS TO HIS FRIENDS AS HE LISTENS TO CHRIST. They have free access into His presence for holy and happy intercourse and are **ALWAYS WELCOME.** There, too, they pray freely for the interests of Christ and for the needs of His people whether temporal or eternal, and **THEIR PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS HEARD.**

Owing to their prayers He may stop a war, or deliver from internal strife. He loves His friends, and will not allow them to be tried beyond what they are able (*1 Corinthians 10:13*). He listens to their intercession for this groaning world and shows mercy to prayerless men through the prayers of His friends. A man may be very busy, his shop crowded with customers, but his son or an intimate friend comes in and gets his ear at once and before anyone else. So it is with us when as the friends of Christ we approach the Father. He counts us as His friends; yea, we are His dear sons, and have liberty of access beyond any of His creatures. The Father delights in having us near Him in holy love and in intimate friendship. We find ourselves far above the strife of nations and the confusion of this world, enjoying our own proper and holy portion – THE FATHER'S LOVE, THE LIFE AND JOY OF THE HOLY FRIENDSHIP IN THE FATHER'S HOME.

May we learn, then, to value the friendship, and to “let brotherly love (brotherly friendship) continue.” It leads to the Father’s House. Let us beware of belittling the friends of Christ or despising them. Let us encourage our children to come into the friendship, to come to Christ, and into the circle of His friends, that they too may enjoy the sweetest portion of eternal ages – DIVINE FRIENDSHIP.

H. D’Arcy Champney (1854-1942)

Fragment

The humiliation of Christ in love draws our affections by grace. The knowledge of and union with Him in heaven forms us into the walk and spirit in which that heavenly Man, that blessed One, walked upon the earth – Him to whom our souls are knit in love, to whom we are united by the Spirit. One is the practical reflex down here of the other.

J.N. Darby (1800-82); Collected Writings (N.S.) Vol. 15, pp.273-4.

POETIC PAGE

Walking there by Galilee,
Behold the One who makes to see
Those blind in sin's captivity –
The image of true deity.

Kneeling in Gethsemane,
Behold the Son who fervently
Prays that 'this cup may pass from me'
And yet obeys so willingly.

Standing on Gabbatha's stone,
Behold the Man who stands alone;
Judge of all at judgement's throne,
True King rejected by His own.

Dying on Golgotha's hill,
Behold the Lamb who to God's will
Submits to thorns and nails until
His Father's word is all fulfilled

Seated at His glorious side,
Behold the Great High Priest, who died
Full salvation to provide,
Interceding for His bride.

Iain Jamieson (2022).

O Father, Thy care is not to make
The desert a waste no more,
But to keep our feet lest we lose the track
Where **His** feet went before.

Mrs. F.E. Bevan (1827-1909).

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.