

Scripture Truth



Inside:

Healthy families
God and the war
When God cried, "Halt!"
Valuing what God values

The Wheat and the Tares
The Ulster Revival recollected
The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Volume 58 No.9

January – March 2015

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

Editor's e-mail: editor@scripturetruth.org.uk

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is published every three months to expound the teaching of the Scriptures so that we “may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

Annual Subscription 2015

£11.00 Post Free UK – £16.50 Post Free Overseas

Contents

When God cried, “Halt!”	225	Healthy families:	
Valuing what God values	226	1. Relationships transformed by truth	238
God and the war	230	The Wheat and the Tares	243
The Revelation of Jesus Christ:		The Ulster Revival recollected	248
The worship of God the creator	234	Out of the depths, Out of the dark (poem)	Back cover

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Authorized (King James) Version (KJV). Rights in the Authorized Version are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown's patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Scripture quotations marked (Darby Trans.) are taken from “The Holy Scriptures, a New Translation from the Original Languages” by J. N. Darby (G Morrish, 1890).

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Front cover: Landscape in the Judean Hills ©irisphoto1 - Fotolia.com

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust
Registered Charity No. 223327

All business correspondence and orders should be addressed to:

SCRIPTURE TRUTH Publications

31-33 Glover Street, CREWE, Cheshire CW1 3LD

Tel: 01270 252274

Fax: 01477 587454

When God cried, “Halt!”

“[Men] appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9, Darby Trans.). It was the custom of the Romans to leave the bodies of their crucified criminals upon their crosses until the carrion birds had cleaned the bones of every shred of flesh. However, as a concession to the Jewish laws they permitted the bodies of Jewish criminals to be buried at nightfall (Deuteronomy 21:23). Their custom was to dig a rough hole near the spot of the crucifixion and cast them in there. These soldiers, who had gambled for the clothes of the Lord, were keen to get back to their dice and their wine, and had prepared beforehand a grave big enough to hold the three corpses. They made His grave with the wicked, for He was nothing to them, and the sooner it was done the better for all concerned.

But when the great work was finished, and the darkness was past, and His beloved Son hung dead upon the cross, God stepped in and cried, halt! No further were men permitted to go on dishonouring the One who had done His will with a perfect obedience. His enemies were thrust aside and from this point onward He was honoured and revered by those who loved Him.

“He was with the rich in His death.” Now Joseph, the timorous and secret disciple, stood forth with the courage of a lion. In the very teeth of a hostile world, and regardless of all consequences, he took his stand by his crucified Lord, and begged His body. It was an unheard of thing! Whoever before had set any value on the body of a crucified criminal? The sacred body was wrapped in pure linen with a hundred pounds of spice, and Joseph and Nicodemus with two or three women gave Him the burial of a King. And here lies the meaning of the grave being introduced before the sufferings are fully told [see Isaiah 53:9-10]. The sort of grave he was to fill was not an afterthought, either on man’s part or God’s; both were prepared and ready before He died.

J.T. Mawson, reproduced from *Scripture Truth*, Volume 27 (1935), page 40

Valuing what God values

The real lesson of Ruth

Theo Balderston

The last verse of the book of Judges underlines that “there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (NKJV). The LORD had said that if Israel obeyed His voice and kept His covenant they would be to Him a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:5). However, so far from their being capable of this, by the end of Judges it had become clear that they needed a king themselves, due to their rampant lawlessness under the judges. This was graphically illustrated by the shocking events recounted in Judges 19-20.

And God arranged that His purposes regarding the establishment of His king in Israel came about through the obedience and faith of three women – Naomi, Ruth, and Hannah. This article is about the first two.

Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, had been so far untrue to the meaning of his own name (“God is king”) as to desert his inheritance in time of famine – the inheritance which God through Joshua had assigned to his forefathers. Elimelech had moved to Moab. It was the natural thing to do, but to desert the inheritance was a lapse of faith, and lapses of faith have large consequences. In Moab Elimelech’s sons naturally married women from pagan families (see Ruth 2:15). True, only intermarriage with the peoples of the land was prohibited by the Law (Exodus 34:16; Deuteronomy 7:3). But Mahlon’s and Chilion’s children would almost certainly have been assimilated to the nation and religion of Moab, so that a name and family to which God had allotted an inheritance in the land of promise would have sunk without trace in a sea of idolatry.

However God interrupted the natural consequences of Elimelech’s lapse by a strange providence. No children were born to the family whilst it was in Moab. Elimelech himself died there, as did his two sons, leaving the family without a surviving heir.

Let us all be very ware of moving to Moab in our hearts and minds! Are we sometimes tempted by the devil to think the race of faith (Hebrews 12:1ff) too hard and to allow ourselves a little time off? It may have disastrous consequences, if not for ourselves, then for those we love. Think of Abraham’s lapse of faith that led him into Egypt, and its effects on Lot!

Elimelech’s lapse was disastrous for himself. And yet, in God’s sovereign grace, it resulted in greater blessing for his wife and one of his daughters-in-law. Ruth actually, and Naomi titularly (4:17), became ancestresses of Messiah. But this sovereignly-ordained blessing could only come about through the faithful actions of Naomi and Ruth.

What quality of faith did Naomi have? At first reading, the first chapter of Ruth portrays nothing more than a homesick widow prudently advising her daughters-in-law not to accompany her back to Israel. But there is one tell-tale part of her advice to Orpah and Ruth. “If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for me till they were grown?” (vv.12-13) Really? Who said that Orpah and Ruth would have had wait for husbands by this route? Boaz didn’t see it this way. He pronounced a divine blessing on Ruth because she “did not go after the young men, whether poor or rich” (3:10). He saw no obstacle to Ruth quickly marrying again now that she was in Israel.¹ Why then did Naomi not think of this? The only reason can be that her mind was set on the practice of so-called levirate marriage (see Deuteronomy 25:5ff), whereby a brother of a dead and childless man took his widow to wife, and the son of that marriage was regarded as son of the deceased, “that his name be not blotted out in Israel.” She valued what God valued and her husband had treated lightly, namely, his inheritance and its remaining in the line to which God had assigned it.

Naomi had no doubt deeply asked herself why everything had gone wrong when they went to Moab. She evidently concluded that this was because Elimelech had despised the LORD’s inheritance which his forbears had passed down to him. She evidently also viewed with horror the disgrace to her husband of his name being extinguished in Israel, and thought that it was up to her to prevent this happening. But there was another obstacle to her remedying this disaster, in addition to her age (1:12). Ruth 4:5 implies that there was no living brother to raise up seed for Ruth’s dead husband. (If the “nearer kinsman” had been a brother of Elimelech he surely wouldn’t have needed Boaz to remind him of his duty.) But Naomi evidently hoped

¹ The question arises regarding Deuteronomy 23:3. However, if that commandment prevented one of the young men of Bethlehem from marrying Ruth, it would also have prevented any future sons of Naomi’s. Could it be that this law applied only to male Moabites or Ammonites?



*Lapses of
faith have
large
consequences*



*Think of
Abraham’s
lapse of faith
that led him
into Egypt,
and its
effects on
Lot!*



that the name could be perpetuated by a less immediate kinsman agreeing to do the duty of a brother.

And we see Naomi's faith reflected in Ruth. She evidently aligned herself with Naomi's project. Often we have a rather superficial view of Ruth's story. We read it as a narrative of God rewarding a gentile for forsaking her own pagan land for the land of Israel, making Naomi's God her God, and compassionately caring for her mother in law when in Israel (cp. 2:11). This is true, yet misses the main point of the story, which is Ruth's devotion to the task of securing the inheritance of Elimelech. This is what Boaz commends her for in 3:10. She could, it seems, easily have found a marriage partner in Bethlehem. Instead she chose not to seek such marriage opportunities. She believed that she could be the means of perpetuating her father-in-law's and her husband's name. By the opportunities she was willing to forgo for the sake of this she showed how much she valued what Israel's God had bestowed. Valuing what God values is faith.

Probably this conviction did not come all at once. Her primary reason for not remaining in Moab with Orpah seems to have been the blank that parting from Naomi would leave in her life: Naomi evidently was a lovely character. This is what Ruth's famous and moving words in 1:16-17 express. But part and parcel of that lovely character was a piety that also attracted Ruth to Naomi's God (v.16), and led from there to the remarkable step of valuing what He valued.

Both Ruth and Naomi were attempting to be faithful; both of them showed that they recognised how much the inheritances of His people meant to the LORD. They evidently considered that their course of action was the only path of blessing, and feared to be off that path. When Ruth reported how that her gleaning had unwittingly led her to Boaz's part of the field, this brought out the faith within Naomi that long adversity had repressed (2:3, 20). She did not regard this turn of events as a happy fluke, but as the LORD's doing. On this basis she instructed Ruth to ask Boaz if he would perform the duty of kinsman-redeemer that the Law prescribed (3:1-4). Ruth's attempts to secure Boaz's intervention revealed the previously mentioned obstacle – the existence of the nearer kinsman. Even this did not damp Naomi's quickened faith. “The man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day” (3:18).

The Law (Deuteronomy 25:5ff) only required *brothers* of the deceased to raise up seed for them; it laid no such duty on next-of-kin beyond that. Hence it has been reasonably conjectured that when Boaz told the “nearer kinsman” that in order to buy the land he had to marry Ruth as well (4:5), he was informing him of a condition laid down *by Naomi* for the sale of the land.² When the “nearer kinsman”

² If the law of Jubilee was being observed (Leviticus 25:8ff), Elimelech could not have sold the land in perpetuity. This explains why Naomi had land to sell – to a kinsman, it seems.

learned of this condition, he declined to purchase. By laying out good money on a plot that would pass to an as-yet-unborn son by Ruth, the inheritance by which his own name would be perpetuated through his existing sons would be reduced (This seems the best sense of 4:6). So Boaz stepped in, impressed by Ruth's faithfulness and courage in pursuing what she had learned from Naomi about faithfulness to the God of Israel. As "a mighty man of wealth" (2:2), his inheritance could not be spoiled. The result was that Naomi received a son vicariously (4:17).

But this son is never said to be a son of Elimelech. Naomi's hope, that a relative less immediate than a brother could perpetuate her husband's name, was futile. Elimelech's name remains only as a dreadful warning of the results of despising the inheritance. None of the genealogies of Obed, Ruth's son, includes the name of Elimelech (Ruth 4:21; 1 Chronicles 2:12; Matthew 1:5).

Thus the book of Ruth ends with the paradox that what Naomi had so striven for – the perpetuation of her husband's name in blessing before God – was disallowed by God; yet He wrought something far greater through her faithfulness. Ruth, the outsider without genealogy in Israel, and indeed member of a people especially far from blessing (Deuteronomy 23:3f), became incorporated into king David's genealogy, and one of only four women (three of them gentiles) mentioned in Messiah's genealogy (Matthew 1:5). God looked on the heart and recognised that Naomi and Ruth valued above all things the inheritance and the blessing of having one's name remembered before God. Thus He was able to bless both, and Ruth particularly, with a far greater inheritance, though He could not grant their actual request. In this gospel day we gentiles can say, "Unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). This is what happened to Ruth in becoming ancestress of Messiah.

And so it happened for us. Though we have no divinely apportioned earthly inheritance, being "strangers from the covenants of promise," yet in Christ we are "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3; 2:12). Though *He* sold "all that He had" to obtain His bride, (Matthew 13:46; Ephesians 5:2) yet He did not mar, but rather gained (as Man) His inheritance. Indeed, the value God places on our inheritance flows from the greatness of what He has purposed for Christ (1:10f). And so the value of this inheritance to us depends on the greatness of our thoughts concerning Christ and His glorification (1:17-23), and concerning the dearness to His Father of the One "in whom we have our redemption, through His blood." He is "God's Beloved" (1:6f). *Ruth* valued the inheritance and hence became an ancestress of the One in whom alone even the earthly inheritance will be secured. *We* are "taken into favour in the Beloved" through free grace (2:7-9), and this grace grants us Christ's inheritance! (1 Corinthians 3:21-22).

So, in our case, being granted the inheritance comes first, then the valuing of it. *Do* we value it? Or do we only value God's interventions in favour of what *we* value?

God and the war

James Boyd

The pages of Scripture Truth in 1915 register the traumatic impact of the mounting death-toll even on a largely non-combatant community. Boyd [1851-1936] gives a more even-handedly compassionate, but also a more level-headed and scripturally incisive assessment of the First World War than would have been found in most contemporary publications, even Christian.

The present prolonged and ruthless strife on the continent of Europe is making manifest the thoughts of the hearts of many regarding the intervention of God in human affairs, and the interest He is supposed to take in the government of the world. Does He at all concern Himself with the things that transpire upon the earth? Is it true that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without Him? Is there a God at all?

Not one of these questions could by any possibility arise in the heart that in simple faith takes the Holy Scriptures as God's revelation to His people. War is always a cruel thing, and hateful to all who love God, and hateful also to Him who has said, "Blessed are the *peacemakers* for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5: 9, KJV); and He is "*the God of peace*" (Romans 16: 20). His children also are exhorted to pray for kings and for all that rule in this world, that we may be able to live quiet and *peaceable* lives in all godliness and honesty (1 Timothy 2:2). But when the world rejected the only One who could make wars to cease (Psalm 46:9) it drove the possibility of peace from the earth, until the time appointed for His intervention in power, when He will "scatter the people that delight in war" (Psalm 68: 30), and bring in a reign of peace. Then, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:3, 4).

The crown is Christ's: it is His by right, and He shall have it, in spite of the hostility of this evil world, and in spite of all the powers of the infernal forces. But until He gets it, crowns must be cast down into the dust, kingdoms overthrown, nations found tearing one another to pieces, multitudes sweating in the munition factories, and continents constantly being cast into the melting pot. And until that day there shall be no improvement in the relation of kingdoms, one to the other. The *entente* allies are fighting against militarism, and expecting to crush that spirit in the German nation, but instead of producing this result, every nation will find that, to

¹ This purely human forecast didn't really happen in the event.

safeguard its own interests, it will have to nourish and stimulate that very spirit in its own people.¹

Men ask, “Why does not God stop this war? Why does He allow this cruel strife and bloodshed to continue?” But were He to put the question to all as to how they would desire it to be settled, I do not doubt that each of the nations engaged in combat would only desire to have it brought to a conclusion in the way of victory for its armies. It is not only the Germans that desire to have “*Gott mit uns*” [God with us] but all the others desire the same for themselves. That is to say, all want the thing settled in their own way; and if God is not going to settle it in that way, they would prefer Him to keep out of it altogether.

To speak candidly, I should be very sorry to see the British nation defeated and brought under the power of any other country. Under the British flag the child of God has hitherto been able to serve the Lord without coming into conflict with the powers that be; I could not say so much about any other kingdom in this world. The persecution of the children of God has taken place in this land before now, and it will take place again; and for this we must be prepared. It is the same old God-hating and Christ-persecuting world as it was when “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers [took] counsel together, against the LORD, and against His anointed” (Psalm 2:2; Acts 4:24-27). Even so, we cannot be too thankful for the tranquillity enjoyed by the people of God in this favoured British nation.

We must also keep in mind, if we are to have right thoughts about all that is going on at present, that the prophets of both the Old and New Testaments set before us the history of the powers that be – during the “times of the Gentiles” – under the symbols of wild beasts, creatures without any intelligent link with God (esp. Daniel 7). We cannot be surprised, therefore, to find them continually snarling at one another and tearing one another to pieces. If there is peace at times it comes about by the overruling hand of God, for the normal state of things in a world like this is



*When
the world
rejected
the only One
who could
make wars
to cease
(Psalm 46:9)
it drove the
possibility
of peace
from the earth*





*In that lonely
Sufferer
amid the
darkness of
Golgotha
I see the heart
of the Creator*



*Were that "hell"
at the front of
the battlefield
ten thousand
times hotter
than it is,
I would say
with boldness,
God is love*



cruel war and bloodshed. But the question will be asked again, "Why does not God stop this war?" Perhaps this question might be better answered if we ask another, "Why should He stop it?" He sent His Son nigh two thousand years ago – that His devil-deceived creature might get to know Him, and that He might have His rightful place in the heart and mind of Adam's poor misguided race. At the commencement of His ministry He set forth the nature of His mission in those wonderful words taken from the prophecy of Isaiah, which relate to Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Scriptures like these set before us the intention of God in sending His Son into the world, as well as does the whole character of His subsequent ministry.

But man's reply to this in the person of the Jew was a gibbet, and in the Gentile, to whom government was committed by God, was such thorough acquiescence that he became the instrument of Jewish hatred,² and murdered Him in whose favour he had pronounced the verdict, "I find in Him no fault at all" (John 18:38). Yet, after such an infamous exhibition of rebellion against God, and refusal of His gracious intervention on man's behalf, people wonder that God does not stop these wars, and give us good times, so that the covetous and godless desires of the human heart may be practised without fear of chastisement. Christ is "the salvation of God" (Luke 2:30), and there is none other; and if men will not have Him they must go on with their wars and all the terrible consequences resulting therefrom. And God's way is Christ, and without His presence on earth there cannot be permanent peace.

² This sentence is correct, yet its formulation has an unpleasant whiff of the anti-Semitism that was all too common in those days.

“Why,” asks some poor brokenhearted woman, “was my boy, or my brother, or my husband stabbed through the heart with a German bayonet?” But the same question is also wrung from the broken heart of a poor German woman; and God is not indifferent to the sorrows of His poor afflicted creatures, whoever they may be. Where did that “hell”, that everyone who has been at the front in Flanders says he has seen, spring from? It had its origin in the corrupt, selfish, covetous heart of man. James says, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain” (4:1f). This is the secret of all contention such as is going on in this war; it is in the heart of man that this “hell” has most surely originated. And on some head, or heads, will the hand of God fall with terrific force some day. That He is not indifferent to the wickedness that has brought it about, nor to the sorrows of His suffering creatures, Calvary is the mighty and overpowering witness, against which nothing that would charge Him with indifference could stand one moment. For there the love of God to His poor sinful creature was exhibited in a way that out-distances all that He has ever done in the past, and all that He could yet do in the future. In that lonely Sufferer amid the darkness of cloud-mantled Golgotha I see the veil of the temple in which God was enshrined rent in twain from top to bottom, and the heart of the Creator brought to light in such a way, that, were that “hell” at the front of the battlefield ten thousand times hotter than it is, I could say, and would say with boldness, GOD IS LOVE.

And His gospel is in this world, not to establish men in it, but to deliver man out of it [Galatians 1:4], and to give him a new place in heaven with Christ, in all the relationships in which He stands to God and the Father, and in all the eternal favour and love of which He is the alone worthy Object. For the soul that casts himself upon Christ as the Saviour of sinners all is well, whether he die upon the battlefield or upon his own bed.

The widow, the fatherless, the brokenhearted, the crippled, and all who suffer, will have the compassion of a Saviour God, whether they know anything about it or not, for He is the Saviour of all men – though in a special way of them that believe (1 Timothy 4:10); and what a joy it is to lead some of those poor sorrowing mortals to the knowledge of Him of whom they have such hard thoughts, when, if they only knew Him, their cup would run over with unspeakable joy. May the Lord in His infinite mercy be pleased to bring this awful conflict to a speedy termination, and in the meantime may He use it to wake up the consciences of many to their utterly ruined condition and to their need of a Saviour. Amen.

From vol. 7, pp. 366-9 (December, 1915), abridged and slightly edited for clarity.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 4:6-11: The worship of God the creator

Donald Davison

A detailed consideration that repays careful reading.

“Come up hither” (Revelation 4:1, KJV). As we saw in our last article,¹ this invitation to John, the writer of the book, means that all the events in it from here onwards are to be looked at from the vantage-point of heaven and of the throne that is at its centre. John becomes a type of the church in the scene which believers from this era are soon to inhabit when raptured to glory (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Chapter 4 shows the glorified saints seated around the throne of God from which the whole universe is ruled and governed, for, as the previous article showed, they are what is typified by the four and twenty elders (see v.4).

Verse 6. As we also saw, from the throne proceed “lightnings and voices and thunderings” (v.5) that might terrify the world but not those seated around the throne. “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal” (v.6). The glass sea speaks of a settled state of things, and crystal of that which is like ice in its purity. It speaks to us of the holiness and nature of God who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and [can] not look upon iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13). In the same verse we read that in the midst of the throne and surrounding it were four living creatures (Darby Trans.; not “beasts” as in the KJV).

This is not the first time we read of these living creatures. In Ezekiel chapter 1 they are mentioned nine times. In Revelation 4 and 5 they are mentioned eleven times and a further nine times in the rest of the book – making twenty-nine references in total. With so many references we gather that they are of importance in connection with the ways of God and the ordering of created things.

They are described as being “full of eyes before and behind” (KJV). Nothing escapes these eyes regarding all events whether in the future or in the past. The living creatures are described as being both in the midst of and around the throne. All creation is in view, weighed and assessed in relation to the government and the claims of the throne of God.

Verse 7. We may ask, who are these living creatures? The number “four” in Scripture speaks of what is universal. All creation is in view (e.g., the four points of the compass, the four winds, the four corners of the earth, etc.). The four living creatures have been generally held to represent the attributes and claims of God over all created beings and things – the authority of His throne over them in government and judgment. They are likened respectively to a lion, a calf, a man, and

¹ See *Scripture Truth*, October, 2014, pp. 204-8.

a flying eagle. In this way they also represent the heads of the animal creation. We can, thirdly, regard the lion as standing for majesty and power; the calf (or “ox”) for endurance; the man for intelligence; and the flying eagle for rapidity of action from on high. But, fourthly, the order in which each of these living creatures is brought before us is in exact correspondence with the order in which our Lord is presented in each of the four Gospels. In Matthew He is seen as the King of Israel, in like character to the lion, the king of beasts; in Mark He is seen likened to the ox in humble, lowly, constant service throughout His life in this world. In Luke the Lord is seen as the perfect, compassionate man amongst men; and in John it is easy to see that He is portrayed as the heavenly man come down to earth (John 3:13; 6:38, etc.) – that is, as the eagle whose native sphere of activity is in the heavens. These four representations of Him are found in the Old Testament in the four statements, “Behold thy King” (Zechariah 9:9) [Matthew]; “Behold my servant” (Isaiah 42:1) [Mark]; “Behold the man” (Zechariah 6:12) [Luke]; and “Behold your God” (Isaiah.40:9) [John].

It is of great interest and encouragement that in Ezekiel 1, where the living creatures are described in detail (vv.4-14), it is also said that there “was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon [the throne]” (verse 26). How encouraging this is for us today! For we know, in a way not revealed in the Old Testament, who the Man “above upon the throne” is – He is our Lord Jesus Christ. We do well to ponder this theme in our hearts and minds, so as to have our souls encouraged and expanded by the wonderful fact, that today there is a Man above upon the throne. One of the great blessings of the day in which our lot is cast is knowing that all is perfectly secure in the Person who is on the throne and the One who is at the right hand of Him that sits upon the throne. This is the absolute guarantee that, whatever may be the trials and troubles here, they will soon all be ruled



*We know
who
the Man
“above upon
the throne”
is*



*He is
our Lord
Jesus Christ*



over and administered to the glory of God by “the Man above upon the throne.”



*“Lord” –
supreme in
authority*

Verse 8. Each of these living creatures is now described as having six wings and being full of eyes within. The “eyes” denote that, in whatever day or dispensation men’s lot has been cast, nothing has escaped the perception and holy discernment of the Lord; and, moreover, that all will be brought forth into the light and presence of a thrice holy God to receive its true assessment. For the “six wings” we need to compare Isaiah 6:1-3, where the seraphim also are described as having six wings: with two of them they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet and with two they did fly. These seraphim in Isaiah are concerned with the holiness of God: they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” Confronted with, and in the presence of, such holiness in the immediate presence of God, these created beings are rightly described as covering both their faces and their feet. In the presence of a holiness that is of the essence of the character of God the only fitting action of created beings is to veil their faces and to guard their freedom of movement. We are reminded of the word to Moses, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).



*“God” –
the eternal
one in
overall
supreme
control*

The living creatures of Revelation 4:8 answer exactly to the seraphim in Isaiah 6, and they too cry, “Holy, holy, holy,” thus extolling His very nature of holiness and intrinsic moral purity. They “rest not day and night” [“cease not”, Darby Trans.]. That is, they are in constant, unbroken activity in drawing attention to and proclaiming the thrice-holy title and character of God. They speak of Him as the “Lord God Almighty,” and thus also proclaim His plenitude of power and authority: “Lord” – supreme in authority; “God” – the eternal one in overall supreme control; and “the Almighty” – the omnipotent, [all powerful] One. They, thirdly, proclaim the eternity of His person: “which was, and is, and is to come”. The One on the throne is the self-existing, eternal One who fills all things, all space, and all aspects of existence throughout what we, in human terms, describe as eternity past, present and future.



*“the
Almighty” –
the
omnipotent,
all powerful
One*

This is the absolute and only eternal God, whose attributes human language is unable to supply suitable words to



express. However the doxology of the living creatures provides terms with which His greatness and glory will be declared continually by all redeemed and all created beings throughout all eternity. And yet the holiness proclaimed here was only manifested in finality in the cross, as Revelation 5 will go on to spell out. These thoughts bring to mind and embellish a statement read long ago, that all eternal blessing is based upon “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the central point of all moral history, where every issue of good and evil has been raised, and met and dealt with to the glory of God and for our eternal blessing.” Praise the Lord!

Verses 9-11. The climax to this expression of the majesty, supremacy, omnipotence, glory, and holiness of God is reached in these verses, and is led firstly by the four living creatures. They “give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever.” This is the signal for the heartfelt response of the whole company of the redeemed in heaven from all dispensations, both old and new, those who are typified by the twenty-four elders that “fall down before Him that sat on the throne and worship him that liveth for ever and ever.” It is from redeemed hearts and a redeemed company that this worship [i.e., worship!] is now offered. We trust to see in the next chapter that this begins the outflow of the hitherto pent-up affection of the hearts of all the redeemed. It now flows out in unrestrained love, affection, praise, worship, and adoration before Him who sat upon the throne, causing the worshipping redeemed to cast their crowns, (that had been awarded to them as reward for their faithful service here below) before the throne, saying, “Thou art worthy O our Lord and [our] God to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and have been created” (v.11, Darby Trans.). The “created all things” signals the originality and creatorial power of God – abundance of power! The “for thy pleasure” signifies that this was done according to His determinate will and volition alone.

A fitting doxology of praise and worship, ascribing universal power and creatorial originality to our God from all creation, is in Romans 11:36, “For of Him [origin] and through Him, [the means] and to Him [the end in view] are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”



*All
eternal
blessing is
based upon
the cross of
our Lord
Jesus
Christ,
where
every issue
of good and
evil has
been ...
dealt with
... to the
glory of
God*



Healthy Families:

I. Relationships transformed by truth

David Hughes

Some pithy points for dads and mums here!

John's second epistle is one of the shortest books in the Bible, consisting of only thirteen verses. It and 3 John seem like two little postcard-type notes to people John knew.

2 John is unique in the Bible in being a letter written specifically to a woman. True, some authoritative expositors consider that under the name of "lady" John is actually writing to a church. However, equally authoritative expositors consider that John was writing to an actual "lady" and her children. That's my conclusion, and my two articles are based on this. Accepting this, we can derive some homely and hard-hitting lessons from this little letter about healthy Christian families.

3 John is written to a man named Gaius and we'll hopefully think about that letter in a future issue. If you read both letters you might notice some similarities and some differences. There is a key phrase that occurs in both letters: "walk in truth" (2 John 4 & 3 John 3, 4). To help us get an overview of these two letters we could say that 2 John teaches us to walk in truth in our families and 3 John teaches us to walk in truth in our churches. These are two important areas of our lives, and hopefully in future articles we will see some helpful lessons for our family- and church-relationships so that they become more honouring to Christ.

I'd like to give 2 John the overall title of "Healthy Families". Families are important! My family increased in size last year: my wife and I have a lovely daughter! This privilege and gift have made me think hard about my family. How do I make sure my family is healthy? What values should I make sure my family holds? How can I guard my family against the influences of an unchristian world?

Surely it must be the desire of all of our hearts that, however many or few our children are and however young or old, our families would "work" in a way that honours God and commends the gospel. To help us in this I want to suggest six things that will characterize healthy families.

From verses 1 and 2 let's draw the lesson that healthy families value Christian friendship. Then from verses 3 and 4 we learn that healthy families value the gospel. In verses 5 and 6 we see that healthy families pursue love. That's going to be enough for this article. Then in a future article, God willing, we'll see that healthy families value truth (verses 7-9). Verses 10 and 11 will remind us that healthy families guard against danger. Finally, verses 12 and 13 will teach us that healthy families value face-to-face presence in the church.

Healthy families value friendship in the church

The first thing John says to this “lady” is that he loves her and her children “in truth”, as do all the Christians who know her. Why do they love her? “Because of the truth that is in us” (v.2). There may have been all manner of differences between this woman and John, in terms of social settings,¹ interests, and personalities; and yet the truth that they held in common created a bond between them that overpowered all of these natural differences so that they shared a godly affection for each other. The truth was stronger. Preferences may change over time, distance may separate friends, but John is saying that the truth that he shares with this lady and her children will endure forever, and there will always be affection between believers. What is this “truth” that “abides in us”? Basically, it is the gospel and its implications. So I have to ask the question, “Is the gospel changing me?” Is the unchanging truth changing me, causing me to love other Christians and overcome any personality clashes between us?

John clearly valued this Christian woman and her children. We learn this from the last two verses as well, when he says that he wants to see them and passes on the greetings of her nephews and nieces. Just as it’s natural for families to care about each member of the family and value them, so John’s introduction teaches us the importance of affection among those who are “in the truth”. Where will we find such people? Most immediately we shall find them in our local churches. So, as we leave this point, let’s ask ourselves the question: do I value other believers in the church I attend? Or do I think my family could be better going it alone? How good if I value other Christians and appreciate the help and encouragement they can be to me!

Healthy families value the gospel

In some sense verse 3 is just like a standard greeting, but it contains really helpful truth for us. John says that grace, mercy, and peace *will* be with the lady and her children. He says that these are gifts “from God the Father and the Lord

¹ It is worth noting that the word translated “lady” may mean a woman of social standing. John wasn’t just using a polite way of addressing her. [Ed.]



2 John teaches us to walk in truth in our families



3 John teaches us to walk in truth in our churches



Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.” This reminded me that in order for my family to be healthy we need to think about the things God has given us. The fact that John adds, “and the Lord Jesus Christ,” reminds us that all the blessings God gives us come through Christ and as a result of what He has done for us.

1. God has given us *grace* in salvation. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Healthy families remember, and think often about, the grace Jesus has shown to us in becoming man in order to die for our sins. But John isn't just thinking about past evidences of grace. He says, “Grace... *will be* with you.” John reminds this lady that God continues to be gracious to her every day, giving her good things she does not deserve. Healthy families remember how God has been gracious to them each day. As I think about ways in which God has shown grace to me, I must be challenged to show grace to my family. Hasn't God shown me undeserved grace? In the same way I must try to show grace to my family. Healthy families have a good appreciation of God's grace to us and seek to show similar grace to each other.
2. God has shown me *mercy* in salvation, sparing me the judgment I do deserve. And God shows me mercy every day! How often I do things that are wrong and deserve God's judgment, and yet He shows me mercy. I need to get a grasp of that! Does my reflection upon the mercy God has shown to me make me a more merciful person? Am I merciful to my family if they fail? Can I show them kindness even when they have done wrong? Or do I rub in the mistakes they make and try to ensure they feel as bad as I think they should for what they've done? I need to remember Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:23-35) every day! Healthy families appreciate the mercy they have been shown, and try to be merciful in their dealings with each other.
3. God has given me *peace* in salvation. The debt I owed God has been paid! I've been forgiven. I've been justified and declared to be right before God. I don't need to worry any more about whether God has forgiven me or not. I don't need to fear death, wondering whether or not I've done enough to be accepted by God. He has already accepted me because of what Christ has done. I live in the good of a restored relationship. I am at peace with God. That's a daily comfort, not just a fact concerning something that happened when I was saved. Is my family characterized by that kind of peace? Do we often think about, and rejoice in, the peace that Jesus has won for us? And what about peace in our relationships with each other? Does my family know that I love them and accept them? Or do they constantly live in doubt, wondering whether they have done enough to please me or earn my favour? Healthy families celebrate the peace brought by the gospel.

Did you notice the little phrase at the end of verse 3: “in truth and love”? This is an important little phrase that adds context and meaning to the grace, mercy, and peace we have been considering. Families characterized by grace, mercy, and peace will not avoid judgment or discipline when they are really necessary. That would be to ignore the truth. It’s important that my family abides by the truth and that we try to live it out in our lives. But this little phrase acts as a balance. In my quest to live out the truth I must do so in love. This means that any discipline must be tempered by my showing love. It’s a warning to me about setting impossible standards for my family that they will constantly struggle to attain to. Of course I must stand for the truth and so must my family. But the balance of this verse reminds me that we are sinful and we will fail at times. In those times, perhaps particularly in those times, I must remember to act in love and remember grace, mercy, and peace. I’m not to be legalistic in my attempts to live out the truth. My affection is not only to be linked to merit. Rather, healthy families will be ones who love the gospel, value grace, mercy, and peace, and try to express it in their family interactions.



*Families
characterized
by grace
will not
avoid
discipline
when
necessary*

In verse 4 John rejoices because he knows that some of this lady’s children were walking in the truth. That really is a cause for celebration. How much do I rejoice in the spiritual progress of my friends’ children? Christianity is no place for competition, and I must never be jealous that someone else’s children are “doing better” than mine spiritually. Instead I can celebrate if there is any evidence that God has been unbelievably gracious in saving one of my friends’ children. I can celebrate that some young Christian is making progress in their faith and becoming a little bit more like Christ. What an evidence of God’s grace: it’s right that we celebrate it! Is the gospel a cause for celebration in my family? Do we rejoice to see its effects?



*But any
discipline
must be
tempered by
love*

Does the “some of your children” in this verse mean that not all of the lady’s children were believers? We don’t know. It may be that John had only met some of them. But, if it does mean this, it’s just worth noticing that this mother is not criticized because all of her children are not saved. This mother was responsible to teach the truth to her chil-




*So how
do I
encourage
my family
to pursue
love?*


*Avoiding
gossiping,
bad-
mouthing,
or
grumbling
about
other
Christians*



dren, to be a living example of it, and to plead in prayer for their salvation. But salvation is God's sovereign work. We can't save our children. If they are saved it will be down to God's grace and to that alone! This is just a gentle reminder not to be critical of parents who have some children who currently are not saved. It's not bad parenting. Instead let's be families that celebrate when we do see evidences of God's saving grace and pray earnestly for each other and for children who are not yet saved.

Healthy families pursue love

John encouraged this lady – in fact he pleaded with her – that “we should love one another.” Christian love is a command and not just an emotion, a matter of the will and not just a gushy kind of feeling. It's a practical thing. He says “walk in it”. The New Testament gives numerous examples of ways in which we can love one another. Do I follow them? Is my family characterized by an abundant love, each for the other? John also links love to the truth: “we walk according to His commandments.” It's not loving to ignore things that are wrong. In fact I best show love to my family by putting into practice the things that Jesus said, not primarily by buying flowers, romantic gestures, or taking my kids to Disney world.

So how do I encourage my family to pursue love? Perhaps some ways might include avoiding being critical of other believers, not gossiping, bad-mouthing, or grumbling about other Christians. That's not setting an example to my family to love those believers. I could always try to assume the best possible motives of people. Often we can be so cynical and always think people have ulterior motives. That may or may not be true but I'm not showing much love if I always assume it. I could try to do kind things for other people, and teach this habit to my children. There is an abundance of practical ways in which we can encourage our families to show love to each other and to others.

In a future article we will consider the rest of this little letter. But for now let's reflect on the challenges John gives us to value Christian friendship, to celebrate and value the gospel and all of its effects, and to pursue love within our families.

The Wheat and the Tares

Iain Martin

If the kingdom of God is already present, why is evil still all too evident in the world? In this well-known parable the Lord gives His profound yet simple answer.

Chapter 13 in Matthew's Gospel consists of seven parables taught by the Lord, often called the "kingdom parables" because of their references to the kingdom of heaven. The parable that is the subject of this article is the second of the seven and is often called "The wheat and the tares."

There are two parts to a parable. There is first of all the earthly story, then secondly there is the heavenly meaning.

It is all too easy just to listen to the story but not to understand the meaning. In this passage Jesus gives first of all the story (verses 24-30); and then come the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven that we cannot consider within the confines of this article. But, after Jesus had finished telling all the first four parables, had left the field, and entered the house, the disciples came to Him to ask Him a question, "Explain to us the parable of the tares in the field" (v.36, NKJV).

After verse 36, everything the Lord said down to verse 52 was for the disciples' ears only. The multitude did not have "ears to hear" – they didn't even request an explanation of the parable of the sower. But the disciples did have "ears to hear" (vv. 9, 14-16). And so, having heard the parable, they now also request its explanation. So in verses 37-43 Jesus explains it. Then you notice, right at the very end of all of that, He repeats, in verse 43, what he had first said to the crowd, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" This is another way of saying that it is important that you disciples should understand not simply the story but the meaning of the story.

The Lord says the same to us. We need to listen, not only with our outward ears but with our heart, and understand what God is teaching – the spiritual teaching and meaning, the religious importance of the story. We should be asking God all the time that we might receive understanding. It is all too easy to sit in a church building or a room listening to the Word of God and thinking that it is very nice to sit and listen to someone talk for a little while. That is not enough! "*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*". The way to listen to the Word of God is to be asking the Lord all the time to teach you things which you do not know so that you may learn the lessons of the gospel.

The first parable of the seven is all about the sower, the seed and the soil. It is a tale of *one* Sower, and describes the work of *Christ*: the sowing of the *one* seed – which is God's word – and the various ways it is received in the world. By contrast, the second parable is a warning to us about the work of the *devil*. It is a

tale of *two* sowers (the Lord and the devil), *two* types of seed – the good seed (the wheat) and the bad seed (the tares) – and *two* harvests (heaven and hell).

Now Jesus says expressly, “The field is the world” (v.38). Psalm 24:1-2 tells us that,

The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fulness,
The world and those who dwell therein.
For He has founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the waters.

And in John 1:1-5 we read concerning the Word, who was “in the beginning, with God” and Himself God, that, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The field belonged to Him! And now the One whose life was light was there: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” The Sower is the Son of man. Note that in the “parable of the Sower,” the Sower comprehends all teachers of God’s truth, including Jesus. But in the parable of the wheat and the tares the Sower is exclusively Jesus. He is the “owner” (verse 27), and “the Son of man” (verse 37).

The world, then, is this field, and the field is Christ’s. But the darkness was also there. “While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way” (v.25).

Here we have the character and circumstances under which this change came about. These men – these field labourers – were put in trust, and the enemy brought in the evil seed while these men slept. The other sower is called “his enemy,” “an enemy,” “the wicked one,” and “the devil” (verses 25, 28, 38-39). To describe this enemy, Jesus uses the word *diabolos*: the accuser, deceiver, liar, and betrayer, the one who is against all that is true and righteous.

From the beginning of the Bible we see that the devil is cunning:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:1-4).

And from the beginning of the Bible we also see the enmity between the serpent and the woman’s seed:

So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field. On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He

shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:14).

It is while men sleep that Satan does the mischief. It may not be manifest for a time, but he has sown it, and it will soon spring up. Satan is not hindered even by the good seed being there. He does not bother to sow the wicked among the wicked, but the wicked among the good. The men slept; the enemy entered unperceived, sowed the tares among the wheat, and then went his way, having done the deed. The tares may not be seen immediately; but they are in the ground, and much of it is occupied by them.

“But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared” (v.26). This was the successful result of the enemy’s work: they sprang up together. There was not at first any outward distinction: they were all mixed up together. Satan’s malicious intention in sowing tares among the wheat is to cause problems and confusion.

And so the field was found to be overrun with tares. But God cannot be blamed for them, because He does not sow evil. The servants come and say, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” The Lord’s reply is, “An enemy has done this” (vv.27-28). The Son of God looked down at His field which He had sowed with good seed, and found it filled with tares.

But neither are God’s plans frustrated by the devil’s work. The servants said, “Do you want us then to go and gather them up?” (v.28) This is man’s wisdom – trying to set the world to rights in his own strength. “No,” said the Lord. There are circumstances existing at present which make this proposal impossible – they are now together, and let them both grow together. “If I were to give you power now to pluck up the tares, you might unconsciously root up the wheat with them, which cannot be” (v.29, paraphrased). “Let both grow together until the harvest.” No matter how much society tries to legislate or separate out lawbreakers from the rest of



Satan does not bother to sow the wicked among the wicked, but the wicked among the good



The field was overrun with tares, but God cannot be blamed for them





*Then
shall the
righteous
shine
forth
as
the sun*



society, the seeds of sin and crime find a place to grow.

There was no remedy for that, as regarding the present state of things – to instantly set the world right was not in the mind of God. Man was a faithless steward; he had been negligent, and let in the enemy (Genesis 3:6). But the Lord Jesus did not come to judge the world, but to save it (John 3:17; 12:47). Now is not the time of judgment, but of the offer of unbounded grace. This is the time when, “A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoking flax He will not quench” (Isaiah 42:3; cp. Matt. 12:20). How glad we should be about this! If at any point in our lives up to the time we were saved the command to pull up the tares had been issued, where would we be?

But we should not imagine that the present day of God’s grace to sinners will last for ever. Verse 39 tells us about the harvest. “The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are the angels” (v.39). And at this harvest, “I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn’” (v.30).

This tells us about the cleansing of the earth, polluted for long ages by God’s permitting of the “tares” to grow unhindered. Therefore the parable gives us a view first of the gathering together of the tares in bundles for the purpose of being burnt. The moral state of this world is downwards. The tares are growing in strength, but they are being brought together ripe for destruction. Though they may think all is well and they have no need to fear the Lord, there is a day of reckoning approaching.

Then the wheat is gathered into the barn. Many have understood this to refer to the rapture of the saints.¹ Here is the order: The tares are gathered in bundles to be burned; the wheat is lodged in the barn; then the burning of the tares takes place.

¹ Cp. J. N. Darby, “The wheat and the tares”, in his *Collected Writings*, vol. 12, pp. 41ff (Morrish edition). These are notes of an address given in 1838.

Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth (vv.40-42).

Another view of this is provided in Revelation:

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped (Revelation 14:14-16).

The final stage is, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (v.43). This brings before us the unhindered blessings and glory of the children of God – of those who are alive to God – that will be perpetually displayed before a world now cleansed of the tares.

That time is coming; and it is a thing greatly longed for. Remember that everything that offends has been cast out; all iniquity burnt up, destroyed; the saints safely housed in the barn. “Then shall the righteous shine.” There are two things which should be a great comfort to all believers – they shall see the Saviour whom they love, and they shall be found in Him, participating in His glory, and like Him. This is what we should be rejoicing in, pressing towards, and looking for. “We shall see him as he is,” and “We shall be like him,” – best of all, in the presence of the Father, in His house, in the kingdom of our Father, having fellowship with Him everlastingly.

Christians have often been asked, “If there’s a God, why doesn’t He do something about all the wrong and evil in the world right now?” This parable is the answer.



*“We
shall
see Him
as
He is”
and
“We
shall be
like Him”*



The Ulster Revival recollected

C.H. Mackintosh

All the revivals that punctuated protestant history from the early eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century were mixtures of both excellent and questionable features. Ten years after, Mackintosh analysed both sides of the 1859 revival from first-hand observation of it, and put them in a letter to a fellow-evangelist. I should add that the analysis is republished as of perennial value, not as comment on any gospel work known to me.

There is one point in connection with our subject [i.e, evangelization, Ed.] which has much occupied my mind, and that is the immense importance of cultivating an earnest faith in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. We want to remember at all times that we can do nothing, and that God the Holy Ghost can do all. It holds good in the great work of evangelization, as in all beside, that it is “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” [Zechariah 4:6]...

I have been thinking a good deal lately of that memorable time, now exactly ten years ago, when the Spirit of God wrought so marvellously in the province of Ulster. I think I gathered up some valuable instruction from what then came under my notice. That was a time never to be forgotten by those who were privileged to be eyewitnesses of the magnificent wave of blessing which rolled over the land. But I now refer to it in connection with the subject of the Spirit’s action. I have no doubt whatever that the Holy Ghost was grieved and hindered in the year 1859 by man’s interference. You remember how that work began: you remember the little school-house by the road side where two or three men met, week after week, to pour out their hearts in prayer to God, that He would be pleased to break in upon the death and darkness which reigned around; and that He revive His work, and send out His light and His truth in converting power. You know how these prayers were heard and answered. You and I were privileged to move through these soul-stirring scenes in the province of Ulster; and I doubt not the memory of them is fresh with you as it is with me this day.

Well, what was the special character of that work in its earlier stages? Was it not most manifestly a work of God’s Spirit? Did not He take up and use instruments the most unfit and unfurnished, according to human thinking, for the accomplishment of His gracious purpose?

...Further, can we not distinctly recall the fact that there was a most decided setting aside of all human arrangement and official routine?¹ Working men came from the field, the factory, and the workshop, to address crowded audiences; and we have seen hundreds hanging in breathless interest upon the lips of men who could not speak five words of good grammar. In short, the mighty tide of spiritual life and power rolled in upon us, and swept away for the time being a quantity of human machinery, and ignored all question of man's authority in the things of God and the service of Christ.

Now we can well remember, that just in so far as the Holy Ghost was owned and honoured, did the glorious work progress; and, on the other hand, in proportion as man intruded himself, in bustling self-importance, upon the domain of the Eternal Spirit, was the work hindered and quashed. I saw the truth of this illustrated in numberless cases. There was a vigorous effort made to cause the living water to flow in official and denominational channels, and this the Holy Ghost would not sanction. Moreover, there was a strong desire manifested, in many quarters, to make sectarian capital out of the blessed movement; and this the Holy Ghost resented.

Nor was this all. The work and the workman were lionised in all directions. Cases of conversion which were judged to be "striking" were

¹ I am sure this reference to clerisy would in no way have been intended to disparage the vital pre-planning and arrangement in forms of gospel work that demand it, e.g., camp work – so long as this is truly governed by the realization that "without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) [Ed].



*“Not by might,
nor by power,
but
by my Spirit,
saith the
Lord of hosts”*




*Was it not
most manifestly
a work of God's
Spirit?*


*Did not He use
instruments the
most unfit and
unfurnished,
according to
human
thinking?*



blazed abroad and paraded in the public prints. Travellers and tourists from all parts visited these persons, took notes of their words and ways, and wafted the report of them to the ends of the earth. Many poor creatures, who had up to that time lived in obscurity, unknown and unnoticed, found themselves, all of a sudden, objects of interest to the wealthy, the noble, and the public at large. The pulpit and the press proclaimed their sayings and doings; and, as might be expected, they completely lost their balance. Knaves and hypocrites abounded on all hands. It became a grand point to have some strange and extravagant experience to tell; some remarkable dream or vision to relate. And even where this ill-advised line of action did not issue in producing knavery and hypocrisy, the young converts became heady and high-minded, and looked with a measure of contempt upon old established Christians, or those who did not happen to be converted after their peculiar fashion – “stricken,” as it was termed.

In addition to this, some very remarkable characters – men of desperate notoriety, who seemed to be converted, were conveyed from place to place and placarded about the various streets, and crowds gathered to see them and hear them recount their history; which history was very frequently a disgusting detail of immoralities and excesses which ought never to have been named. Several of these remarkable men afterwards broke down, and returned with increased ardour to their former practices.

These things I witnessed in various places. I believe the Holy Ghost was grieved and hindered, and the work marred thereby. I am

thoroughly convinced of this: and hence it is that I think we should earnestly seek to honour the blessed Spirit; to lean upon Him in all our work; to follow where He leads, not run before Him. His work will stand: "Whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever." "The works that are done upon the earth, He is the doer of them." The remembrance of this will ever keep the mind well balanced. There is great danger of young workmen² getting so excited about their work, their preaching, their gifts, as to lose sight of the blessed Master Himself. Moreover, they are apt to make preaching the end instead of the means. This works badly in every way. It injures themselves, and it mars their work.

The moment I make preaching my end, I am out of the current of the mind of God, whose end is to glorify Christ; and I am out of the current of the heart of Christ, whose end is the salvation of souls, and the full blessing of His Church. But where the Holy Ghost gets His proper place, where He is duly owned and trusted, there all will be right. There will be no exaltation of man; no bustling self-importance; no parading of the fruits of our work; no excitement. All will be calm, quiet, real, and unpretending. There will be the simple, earnest, believing, patient waiting upon God. Self will be in the shade; Christ will be exalted.

I often recall a sentence of yours. I remember your once saying to me, "Heaven will be the best and safest place to hear the results of our work." This is a wholesome word for all workmen. I shudder when I see the names of Christ's servants paraded in the public

² And old workmen too! [Ed.]



*The mighty tide
of spiritual
power swept
away for the
time a quantity
of human
machinery, and
man's authority
in the things of
God*





*Just in so far as
the Holy Ghost
was owned and
honoured, did the
glorious work
progress*



*In proportion as
man intruded
himself, was the
work hindered
and quashed*



journals, with flattering allusion to their work and its fruits. Surely those who pen such articles ought to reflect upon what they are doing: they should consider that they may be ministering to the very thing which they ought to desire to see mortified and subdued. I am most fully persuaded that the quiet, shady, retired path is the best and safest for the Christian workman. It will not make him less earnest but the contrary. It will not cramp his energy, but increase and intensify it. God forbid that you or I should pen a line or utter a sentence which might in the most remote way tend to discourage or hinder a single worker in all the vineyard of Christ. No, this is not the moment for aught of this kind. We want to see the Lord's labourers thoroughly in earnest; but we believe, most assuredly, that true earnestness will ever result from the most absolute dependence upon God the Holy Ghost.

I must now close for the present, my much loved brother and fellow-labourer; and I do so with a full heart, commending you, in spirit and soul and body, to Him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and called us to the honoured post of workers, in His gospel field. May He bless you and yours, most abundantly, and increase your usefulness a thousand fold!

Abridged from Things New and Old, vol. 12, (1869), pp. 160-66, "A second letter on evangelization"; reprinted in Mackintosh's Miscellaneous Writings, vol. 3.

Concerning Himself by J T Mawson

Paperback; 170 pages; STP Price: **£6.00** plus postage & packing

An e-book edition for the Amazon Kindle is also available

Christianity is all about Christ, and unless He is the all-absorbing Subject of each Christian's life then, as John Owen wrote in *Christologia* as long ago as 1679, "whatever outward ornaments may be put upon its exercise, it is but a useless, lifeless carcass".

Over more than 30 years, as he edited and contributed to *Scripture Truth*, J. T. Mawson was 'drawing out from the Scriptures the things concerning Christ'. The present volume contains thirteen inspirational articles on exactly this theme. They first appeared as a series entitled "Things Most Surely Believed" in Volumes 26-27 (1934-35) plus an additional article in Volume 28 (1936), and were revised and published in book form in 1936.

In this new edition, Scripture references have been checked and amended where necessary, and references have been added for some other verses quoted. Details of publications referred to in the text have been added at the end of the book.

"The Word of God is the only authority upon which I base the assurance with which I have written of these things, and by the Word of God alone what I have written must be tested and judged" (*from the Author's Preface*).

Remembering my Creator since my youth

by David Anderson

Paperback; 192 pages; STP Price: **£6.50** plus postage & packing

An e-book edition for the Amazon Kindle is also available

The majority of this book first appeared as a series of articles in *Scripture Truth* between July 2009 and April 2014. As its title implies, it is the outcome of a lifelong application of Ecclesiastes 12:1. It is not primarily about the "science versus the Bible" debate but about the more important matter of what the Bible, *the Word of God*, teaches about creation; and the need for 21st-century Christians to stand for this teaching in an increasingly materialistic and secular world, marked by aggressive and hostile atheism. "Science, at its best, is only relative truth for today and may be proved wrong tomorrow; but Scripture is absolute truth which abides forever." As a teenager the author experienced the penetrating effect of God's Word and after a career of over forty years as a practising industrial chemist he remains as convinced as ever of the accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible.

It's by *faith* that Christians understand that the universe was created by the word of God. So what *must* I believe about creation? This *apologia* for the biblical view attempts to answer that crucial question.

Out of the depths, Out of the dark

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry unto Thee.
If Thou should'st mark sins, Lord, where would I be?
But You forgive, that God-fear be due:
Who is a pardoning God like You?

Out of the dark, Lord, look I for Thee,
more than the watchmen the morning to see,
when, all at once, and before dawn of day
You will come down, Lord, and catch us away.

Theo Balderston