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Living Water

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Living Water — Issue No. 59

Recent Ministry		Page
THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS — CHAPTER 15		1
Continuing the series on Romans based on Bible readings in Bromley		
NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME	Philip Wallach	6
A preaching of the gospel		

Poetry Selection

COMMITTAL	Charles A. Coates	10
Written on his conversion at the age of sixteen		
COMMITTAL	Huldreich Zwingli	11
Written when he thought he was dying of the plague		
COMMITTAL	John McClure	12

Testimony Section

GOD IN THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE	Phil Toft	13
------------------------------------	-----------	-----------

A Voice from the Past

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY — 1929	Robert Dunn	14
Continuing the extracts from Robert Dunn's diary. In this issue he shares his thoughts on the prophet Nahum.		

A PLACE IN GOD'S FAVOUR — EXTRACTS FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF FRANK PURDAY		14
---	--	-----------

A Word for Today

GOD — A FAITHFUL CREATOR	Gerald Cowell	17
--------------------------	---------------	-----------

Reprint From "Living Water" No. 11

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE	Ulrick Jelineck	22
The fifth in a series of extracts from the early issues of "Living Water"		

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS — CHAPTER 15

(Highlights of a Bible reading)

In the previous chapter, Paul had been showing the christians in Rome how they were to value one another, including the weak brother. (“Now him that is weak in the faith receive, not to the determining of questions of reasoning... One man esteems day more than day; another esteems every day alike” [Romans 14:1&5]). This chapter continues the theme: “But we ought, we that are strong, to bear the infirmities of the weak”. The passage continues: “Let each one of us please his neighbour with a view to what is good, to edification”. The Lord Jesus is the model in this, as in everything: “For the Christ also did not please himself” (v.3). Paul takes the opportunity in speaking of these matters to point to the Lord. The expression that the “Christ also did not please himself” goes well beyond any of the practical questions in chapter 14 of regarding one day more than another, or of eating or not eating or doing things that might stumble another.

The verse quoted from Psalm 69 in this chapter is very far reaching. “The reproaches of them that reproach thee (God) have fallen upon me” (Psalm 69:9). Such is the burden that Christ had to bear as taking upon Himself these reproaches. Later in the Psalm we read: “Reproach hath broken my heart” (v.20). It must have been the greatest sorrow that the Lord had to bear as He passed through this world. Wherever He went He met reproach towards God. Instead of blessing God, praising God, thanking and worshipping Him, men despised Him. The heart of the Lord Jesus was broken with this reproach. He felt this more than anything else; He walked through a world that did not know God but despised Him.

Paul continues with something that might well be our frequent prayer: “Now the God of endurance and of encouragement give to you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus”. What a carefully balanced statement that is. It is not necessarily going to be easy; it is going to require endurance. Even in the epistle to the Ephesians Paul stresses the need for bearing with one another in love and using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. It is much easier to love my own way than to consider what will promote the life of the christian company locally.

The desire to be like-minded is a necessity in the christian company. It puts out of the way such things as private opinions, theoretical views, being self-opinionated and dogmatic. These things are the fruit of pride working in my heart. But then, even so, we might agree without reference to the Lord and so we are to be

governed by His interests and His mind. This is where we are to find our like-mindedness. This is the only true ground of like-mindedness: “According to Christ Jesus”. The mind that was in Christ Jesus is the mind that was prepared to go down (see Philippians 2:5-8). If any of us is able to take on that mind it will help greatly in our relations with one another.

Then in our links together there is another matter. Paul speaks of Apollos whom he would have liked to go to a certain place but it was not Apollos’ mind to do so (see 1 Corinthians 16:12). The matter had to be left because it was something that was between Apollos and the Lord and was not Paul’s own responsibility. It was not an issue of the truth but a matter for personal and individual action. So if we disagree, we need to make sure what the disagreement is about. Is it a matter of the truth in its teaching or practice? Or is it something that relates to personal walk and service which must be left, prayerfully and affectionately, to the individual?

In all these matters it is a great help if we are of one mind in recognising the authority of scripture and the place of the Holy Spirit interpreting that authority. Alongside that is to go real humbleness of mind that recognises that we do not always see things clearly.

Paul exhorts the saints here to “Receive ye one another, according as the Christ also has received you to the glory of God” (v.7). It is a very high standard. How far any of us measure up to that would be a question but the principle of it is that we are to receive one another in that spirit. Paul knew by personal experience how Ananias had received him (see Acts 9). Ananias saw clearly that the Lord had received Paul. He therefore did the same in the same spirit. That illustrates very much what Paul is saying here. Ananias said, “Saul, brother” and Paul came into the gain of that reception.

Paul commended the Christians in Rome. He says that he is persuaded that they were “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another”. There must have been some very evident manifestation of these features in the company in Rome. Paul must have known of this by report, because he had not been to Rome personally. It would be a very blessed thing if each of our local companies was reported as full of goodness.

Goodness, in this sense, is not something we have naturally and knowledge has to be acquired. We do not start full of knowledge but the two have to be kept together if admonition is to be successful. If we do not know what we are talking about we cannot admonish and if we are not full of goodness we will not be

doing it in the right way. Being able to admonish without giving offence is a very great matter in the christian company. We see something of it in the way Paul approached the Corinthians in love despite all that was there.

Barnabas was able to admonish and encourage at Antioch. The scripture goes on to say, “for he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 11:24). There is a very real connection between this ability to keep brotherly relations and to be a help to one another. The implication here is that we all need admonition at some time. This line of goodness and being filled with the Holy Spirit is the way of it. That makes way for God to work through us.

The apostle strikes a very gracious note in these verses. To some extent he is saying that he hardly felt the need to write this epistle to them because they already had knowledge of the gospel and were consistent with it. So he says he had written, in part, so as to refresh their minds about it. What they knew by way of soul experience is set out for them in an orderly way.

From verse 17 Paul is speaking of how he carried out his own service: “aiming to announce the glad tidings, not where Christ has been named, that I might not build upon another’s foundation” (v.20). He was commissioned to act as one that planted. Yet it is interesting that he had not been to Rome. He had a high regard for the christians in Rome but we are not told who took the gospel there in the first place. The work of God in the power of the Holy Spirit is greater than any minister. The establishment of a stable christian company in Rome had not depended upon Paul and there is no reason to think that it depended on Peter either. The sovereign work of the Spirit of God appeared in Rome and when Paul finally came there as a prisoner he came to an established company. We should not think that every Gentile assembly was established by Paul because clearly it was not.

The latter part of the chapter is very encouraging. Paul is telling the Romans that the believers in Asia had provided for the needy in Jerusalem. It shows the way that the company of those that love Christ would work together to support and encourage one another. In saying this he was encouraging those in Rome to think of others and to be involved in more than just their own company.

Paul follows this with an appeal for their prayers: “But I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in prayers for me to God” (v.30). Paul wanted to draw the brethren into his own spiritual concerns and ministry and felt the need of their prayers.

There is another important line running through the chapter, in relation to worship. In exhorting the saints to be like-minded, Paul gives the reason, “that ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according as Christ ... has received you to the glory of God” (Vs.6 & 7).

In one sense, worship draws us together. Where the spirits of the Lord’s people are directed towards Him and His glory and His desire to praise His God in the assembly, then their spirits will be subdued, He will be magnified and their hearts will then be lifted up together. That may be something of what the apostle had in mind in Ephesians 3, “in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height” (Ephesians 3:18). We might have thought that it was just at that point that most of the saints would have got left behind but what he said was “with all the saints”. However, where there is a spirit of disunity that is a very great hindrance to the service of God.

Worship helps us in togetherness because through it we can take account of the appreciation of Christ which each has. In this way we are drawn to those who have love for Christ and grow in our appreciation of the Lord through what others say. In Revelation we read, “To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Revelation 1:5-6). It is not a question of one person conducting the worship; all believers are priests and that means that we are able to take account of the features of the work of God shining forth in one and another. One may have a very much greater appreciation of Christ than another but the character of the appreciation in the heart of each believer is the same and that is very wonderful.

Worship gives character to our work for the Lord. We know what it is to be:

‘Absorbed in favour all divine,’

as the hymn puts it and as a result to take on something of the character of Christ in any work we may undertake. It is a test to us just how much we are really affected by divine favour and love. When the Lord was here persons came to Him and they were either changed or nothing happened. We may say that we enjoy the presence of Christ but if we have real contact with Christ that contact must change us.

Verses 8 to 13 of our chapter are taken up with justifying what the apostle has said in verses 6 and 7. He brings these verses in to illustrate from Old Testament scriptures that a response to God from all nations was in the mind of God long before. Paul had been privileged to play a part in bringing that about and he is thankful.

“Jesus Christ became a minister of the circumcision ... to confirm the promises of the fathers”. The Old Testament makes clear that the Lord would first come to His own, to Israel. He took the place of serving among His earthly people. He confirmed the promises made to the fathers. One very striking promise was made by God to Abraham: “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves” (Genesis 22:18). Well, that has been brought to pass. So we read here: “Rejoice, nations with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye nations, and let all peoples laud him” (vs. 10-11). Those converted from the nations were to be dedicated to the service of God. In the epistle to the Hebrews it is recorded: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips confessing his name” (Hebrews 13:15). That is for the nations to share, we ourselves among them, in serving God.

The Jew had been accustomed to worshipping God but needed his soul delivered from what the scripture calls “dead works”. The Gentiles, speaking generally, had no thought of the true God at all. They made sacrifices to idols and so on but there was no thought of moral change with them, except for the worse. The “offering up of the nations”, if it was to be acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, calls for a change morally in the offerer. Paul’s goal in preaching the gospel of God was with a view to response to God and for those converted to become consistent with the way that God had come out towards them.

In writing to the Romans the apostle wanted to show them that the distinction between Jew and Gentile had been taken away to bring about a united company in Christ. The offerings and praise of such a company was to be sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Based on Bible readings in Bromley, Kent, June and July 2002.

NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME

“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day will bring forth.”

Proverbs 27:1

I do not know what you expect out of your life, or what plans you have got. We are encouraged these days to have plans and objectives and to achieve them. Yet the message in this verse is very clear: we do not know what a day will bring forth.

I wonder whether there has ever been a time when you have started a day and it has not ended as you thought it would. Sometimes, God allows things to happen and we find, at the end of the day, things have arisen that we were not expecting. Many, many things which we plan come to pass and that may lull us into a false sense of security. Yet we do not know what will happen in any day. A few years ago I was going to take my sisters to a village to catch a train. I started that journey but had a car crash and I never got there. I had a plan but I did not know what the day would bring forth.

Maybe you are sitting there thinking about what you will do tomorrow. My friend, you do not know what the day will bring forth. Boast not for tomorrow. Do not make plans for tomorrow that leave out God. There is an urgency in the way that God would speak to you tonight. I know that has probably been said by many preachers before but in God's ways opportunities are given that we might each one receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour for ourselves.

In the Bible we read of God saying: “I have listened to thee in an accepted time, and I have helped thee in a day of salvation: behold, now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation “ (2 Corinthians 6:2). It does not say that the day of salvation is tomorrow: it says, “Now”. God listens to us, He reads our thoughts, He knows what is in our hearts and it might be that for some time He goes along with what we do. God says, ‘I have listened to you’. I wonder what you have said to God. What excuses have you made as to why you should not receive Jesus, or why you do not need Him. You say, ‘I will think of it tomorrow: there is plenty of time!’

In the gospel we speak of life and death issues. We are speaking of the soul and eternal salvation. Do not put off coming to Christ. I was reading in the newspaper on Wednesday about the memories of people who escaped the tragedy in America

when the World Trade Centre was hit by those two aircraft just a year ago. I am sure that many people set off to work in the World Trade Centre that day; they saw their colleagues, sent e-mails, answered the telephone, just like any other day. Life seemed to be going on as usual. The events of September 11, 2001 changed many people's lives for ever. Several thousand passed from time into eternity.

I wonder how many of those people had heard the glad tidings. I wonder if they had answered to them. I wonder how many had said, 'Not today; I will think about it later'. For them tomorrow never came. Boast not for tomorrow. You need to act now. Here, at 6.45pm, is the time for you to receive the Lord Jesus. He came into this world so that you might be able to have peace with God, so that you might, by faith, have a sure and certain hope. He died, offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God so that God's forgiveness and blessing might be available to the sinner.

The Lord Jesus wants to change your life. He wants to give you eternal life, a life that begins in this scene, when you come to Him, and will go on for ever with the Lord. You have a soul that never dies. Your soul will spend eternity somewhere. My hope is that each soul here will spend eternity with Christ but that will not happen unless you receive Jesus for yourself and accept the work which He has done. He said, "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it" (John 17:4).

The work of Christ at the cross is completed; it cannot be added to and nothing can be taken away from it. He completed the work of atonement when He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. He shed His precious blood that God might have a righteous basis to forgive our sins. In the Old Testament we read of many sacrifices of animals that were made. Over the years there must have been thousands of animals slain. While each of those sacrifices looked on to the work of Christ, none of them actually made atonement for the sinner. There was only one sacrifice that was suitable for God. There was only One that was able to give Himself a ransom for all, and that was the Lord Jesus.

God is fully satisfied with what Jesus has done. Tonight, in the glad tidings, the sacrifice of Jesus is the basis on which the gospel goes out. God commends His love to us through the death of Christ. The appeal to your heart tonight is based

on the finished work of the Lord Jesus, the One who has been into death and was raised again by the glory of the Father.

We do not have a dead Saviour. Jesus has died and come forth from death triumphant. He has beaten Satan and has vanquished his power. The power of Satan is very real, and the evidence of his presence in the world tonight is there for all to see. The devil holds people in a grip and they do not realise. The Bible tells us that Satan has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving so that they do not even realise they are sinners and need a Saviour. Satan seeks to hold people in his grip but Jesus came into this world to roll back the power of Satan. He annulled him who had the might of death, that is the devil, so that today in 2002 the offer of salvation should be preached to you. I can stand here, sure in the knowledge of my link with the Saviour, and tell you on the authority of God's word that the same Saviour is available to you.

If you are to come into the blessedness of it you need to trust in the finished work of Christ. It is not enough to know about what He has done or to know about the Gospel or about the appeal of God. Knowing about things is not sufficient. You must trust in Christ for yourself because salvation is not to be found anywhere else.

In one of Peter's preachings recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter says, "salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). That is very wide. "Under heaven" would embrace the whole world and the name of the Lord Jesus is given throughout the world as the only Saviour. I cannot save you. However much I wanted to, I cannot save you. Neither can any of the great religious figures, the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or Mohammed, or Buddha. None of these can save you. There is only One who can meet your need as a sinner, and that is Jesus. Anything that even seems to say the opposite is a lie of the devil.

God is seeking worshippers, but you and I cannot worship God unless we know what it is for our sins to be forgiven and come to understand something of God's heart of love, understand something of the sacrifice He has made by giving up His beloved Son. The gospel is preached that you might come to know God and see how He loves you, that you might see, too, what Jesus has done for you and as a result that your heart and mine might worship.

The Lord Jesus is unchanging in His love for us. He could not do anything more for you than He has done. The apostle Paul expressed it so fully when he spoke of the Lord as “The Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Think of how people cried out against the Lord at His trial and when He was on the cross. The crowd called out, “Away with him, we will not have this man to reign over us”. They taunted Him saying, “Let him save himself”. That is the heart of man. That is your heart and mine. Yet, in wonderful grace, God is appealing to hearts like that.

It makes such a difference when that heart is opened up to receive the message of the glad tidings, to receive the love of Christ, to know forgiveness, redemption and salvation. What a change comes into our hearts as we come to know God. That is the power of the glad tidings, power to change your life. However long you might be left here, your life will be changed because your hope will be in Another. It will not be in what you can do or what you can achieve or how good you are; your hope, as my hope is, will be in the Lord Jesus. Those who trust in Christ have a sure and certain hope and He will never let you down. That is the Saviour who is being offered to you tonight. What He offers is life eternal.

There is only one thing that stops you coming into blessing and that is you! You have the responsibility tonight to accept the gospel. As preaching I have the responsibility to speak of Jesus and to make sure that you understand that you need a saviour and that Jesus is the only Saviour. What you have to do is to receive Him into your heart acknowledging your need as a sinner of a Saviour.

The glad tidings is simple. It does not matter what age you are, what your background is or where you have come from or even why you are here tonight; the gospel is presented to all on the same basis: we are all sinners and we all need a saviour. God has provided the means by which we can come into blessing and that Saviour is available to each one of us tonight. I pray that we might find Him, for His name’s sake. Amen.

Philip Wallach

A preaching of the Gospel, Croydon, 15th September, 2002

COMMITTAL

Jesus Christ has died for me,
For me, a worm of earth,
And by believing I became
A child of heavenly birth.

From all my scarlet sins,
His blood has washed me white,
And with Him I shall ever dwell
In heaven's supreme delight.

Henceforth my lips and pen
Shall seek to spread His fame,
My hands and feet shall swiftly move
To glorify His name.

I seek no earthly place,
My joy is all in Him,
My thirsty soul shall drink no more
From fountains stained with sin.

But in the Lord Himself,
The Lord who died for me,
Despised on earth, enthroned in heaven,
My springs of life shall be.

And when He takes me home
To gaze upon His face,
More loud, and sweet, my soul shall sing
The riches of His grace.

This treasure of His love
Which He has given me,
Oh, may His mercy even now,
Reveal in truth to thee.

Charles A. Coates (1862 – 1945)
Written in 1878 on his conversion.

COMMITTAL

Lo, at the door
I hear death's knock.
Shield me, O Lord,
My strength and rock.

Thy hand once nailed
Upon the tree,
Jesus, uplift
And shelter me.

Wouldest Thou then
Death conquer me
In my noonday?
So let it be!

Oh, may I die,
Since I am Thine;
Thy home is made
For faith like mine.

Huldreich Zwingli (1484 - 1531)

Written in 1519 when he thought he was dying of the plague.

COMMITTAL

Here is my heart for Thee,
Here are my thoughts for Thee,
Here is my life for Thee,
 Jesus, my Lord.
Thou who art good to me,
Do what Thou will'st with me,
 Jesus, my Lord.

Heard when I cried to Thee,
Sought when I longed for Thee,
Found when I looked for Thee,
 Jesus, my Lord.
Now take Thy way with me,
Now make Thine own of me,
 Jesus, my Lord.

Longing to act for Thee,
Ever be true to Thee.
Here am I now for Thee,
 Jesus, my Lord.
Earth has no call for me,
Earth has no claims for me,
Now Thou art all for me,
 Jesus, my Lord.

There are no clouds with Thee,
There is no night with Thee,
Nothing but joy with Thee,
 Jesus, my Lord.
Here is my heart for Thee,
Here are my thoughts for Thee,
Here is my life for Thee,
 Jesus, my Lord.

John McClure (1866 - 1958)

GOD IN THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE

Paul readily accepted christian literature given to him by those who were witnessing to Christ outside the Town Hall in Chester one cold, bright Saturday morning last January. Paul commented with a sad face on the desperate of the world in which we live. This was said with a sense of personal pain. On being asked what was in his mind, he replied, 'I was courting a lady in the factory where I work — she is marrying someone else today!'

As he was told of the rejection which Jesus faced as He brought the message of God's love into this sinful and needy world, he listened carefully. Hearing the message of the love of God expressed at Calvary he was challenged to give his own heart, with its pain and problems to the One who came to the cross to pay the price for his sin. He clearly understood that if he would turn in faith to Jesus he would receive the gift of salvation effective for time and eternity.

There on a cold seat near Chester Town Hall Paul prayed to God asking for forgiveness and for the Lord Jesus to enter his heart as Saviour and Lord. Just then, another christian who had just arrived to participate in our activities and who was completely unaware of the discussion with Paul, came over with a large box of chocolates and said, 'I do not understand this, but I believe God wanted me to give these to you'. Paul, as might be expected, looked somewhat surprised and rather hesitantly expressed his thanks. He took a copy of John's gospel and said that he would read it when he got home. Those who had been speaking to him committed him to God in prayer.

Later the same day one of the christians who had been preaching in Chester that morning saw Paul in a coffee bar in Wrexham, some fifteen miles away. He was talking with two other men. When he was encouraged to share with them what had happened that morning, he smiled and said, 'I already have done so'. The next day he walked for an hour to attend a christian meeting in Brynteg and returned the next Sunday, taking a friend with him.

Paul still needs our prayers, but God's word is powerful and it does not return to Him void and the Lord is still working today.

Phil Toft

The above article is extracted from "Lasting Peace – Changed Lives" published by Christianity Today. In addition to the above the leaflet contains a further six short testimonies. The leaflet is intended for general distribution.

Copies are available from Christianity Today, PO Box 1, Granville Road, Manchester, M14 6AA. (Telephone 0161 434 7000 [24 hours])

Written accounts of the Lord's work in souls, for inclusion in future issues of the leaflet, will be warmly welcomed by Christianity Today. They should be sent direct to the address above.

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY — 1929

October 2nd. Nahum is our prophet this day and, whereas Jonah really gives God's mercy to the great Gentile world, this prophecy takes up the other side and gives His righteous judgments, spoken with true feeling, the visitation of a just and zealous God. They are His adversaries here and He who has proved Himself to be slow to anger is now moving through whirlwind and storm, clouds arising as the dust of His feet. See here how Nahum, while announcing all this, cannot refrain from proclaiming Jehovah's goodness, and that He is a stronghold for those who trust in Him. Happy those who know this refuge, when the storms are raging. See, too, the beautiful word he brings in here to encourage Judah: "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace! Celebrate thy feasts, Judah, perform thy vows: for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off" (Nahum 1:15 Darby Translation).

But the solemn and hopeless and irrevocable judgment is pronounced against the world.

Robert Dunn

A PLACE IN GOD'S FAVOUR

(Extracts from the notebook of Frank Purday)

Christ has died unto sin, and lives unto God. He lives not only personally free from sin (He was ever this), but He is outside the whole range of sin. He lives unto God in scenes where sin can never come and where all things are of God. His death is my title to live to God in the same sphere. Such is the grace of God that I may appropriate Christ's death, and count that I have died to sin. It is only thus that I can reach, "alive to God in Christ Jesus". Dead to sin is not the terminus — it is the station en route — the terminus is "alive to God in Christ Jesus".

Charles A. Coates (Letters of C. A. Coates, Page 6)

First, by the work of Christ you are delivered from the judgment which is due to you and which rested on you. Secondly, you receive the Holy Spirit from the very Person who delivered you. Thirdly the Holy Spirit leads you to the place where Christ is.

J. B. Stoney (6:234)

If it be a question of acceptance, it is “in the beloved”; “as he is, so are we in this world”. If it be the walk, we are to walk, “even as he walked”. If it be a witness, it is, “looking unto Jesus”. If it be as to place, “God...hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”. If it be glory, “the glory which thou hast given me I have given them”. If it be love, it is, “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them”.

J. B. Stoney (9:410)

The real blessing of man does not consist in knowing that he is forgiven, but in knowing God. That is the divine thought in the gospel. The gospel is in itself a proclamation, and the apostles were the heralds. Behind the proclamation and the facts was the purpose which God had in view — so to make Himself known that He might get the heart of man.

F. E. Raven (20:62)

The proof of God’s love is that He has given His Son; the perfection of His love is that He has brought us into His presence.

J. N. Darby (17:295)

The first great feature of John’s testimony as to Christ is the declaration of the Father, that is, God revealed toward the world as love, and as now having in the Son, as Man, an adequate and sufficient object for the satisfaction of His love. Then we have the great work effected by Christ in removing from before God, by the cross, all that was contrary to God and compromised His glory in order that those given to Christ by the Father might be set in His own place as objects here of the Father’s love, and receive from the Son the water which He gives to be in them as a well of water springing up to eternal life, thus connecting them livingly with Himself.

F. E. Raven (7:344)

There are four names of relationship which God has taken with men: “Almighty” (Genesis 17) with the patriarchs; “Jehovah” with Israel (Exodus 6); “Father” with christians (John 17); and “Most High”, in the millennium (Genesis 14) and in Daniel. The name of “Father” makes a difference in the whole position,

associating us with Christ, the Son in whom He is revealed. John's gospel specially brings this out.

J. N. Darby (Synopsis of the Books of the Bible Vol. 2:326)

The love of God and the love of the Father are from the same blessed One. The love of God comes down to us in all our ruin, but the love of the Father connects us with Himself in all His own divine perfection.

J. B. Stoney (8:307)

Now when Christ came, "God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us". He came down to us in our low estate, and removed in the cross the judgment that lay upon us; and until we know what the love of God has effected, and that He can receive us in love, as the parable of the prodigal prefigures, there can be no knowledge of the Father's love. He, as the Son in the bosom of the Father, has declared Him.

J. B. Stoney (8:308)

Christ at the right hand of God is the Son of God at home and He is Man there, and what that means is this, that He is Man there for us without our sins. He was charged with our sins on the cross; God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Now in glory He is a Man without our sins, and declared to be the Son of God. He is the blessed expression of God's love toward man.

F. E. Raven (12:469 - 470)

References:

References, given so that any extract may be considered in its context if desired (unless otherwise stated) relate to the "New Series" Editions of the ministry of the individuals named. The last reference is expressed therefore as '12:470' i.e the extract is taken from the "Ministry of F. E. Raven" (New Series) Volume 12 page 469 - 470. All of the books quoted from are published by the Kingston Bible Trust, Wembley Avenue, Lancing, West Sussex, BN15 9LX, UK

GOD — A FAITHFUL CREATOR

Genesis	8: 20-22 9: 6-15.
Daniel	4: 17,34-35 & 37,
Hebrews	1: 1-3 13: 15 & 16.

I wish to speak of God, first as a faithful Creator, secondly in His present overruling government in this world, and finally as expressed in the Person of the Son; desiring that as a result we might be stabilised in soul and freed from anxiety, helped in our prayers and praise to approach God intelligently and also helped in our testimony.

The present dispensation has always been in the mind of God in a special way and His activities in creation and in government have, from the outset, had it in view. He has operated to provide a framework of stable creatorial and governmental conditions within which to carry out His purposes of grace, none of which can fail to be accomplished.

In being occupied with the spiritual things now revealed, however, we are in danger of failing to give God His due as Creator. The earliest heresies were an attack on this feature of the truth. In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, we are told that “some shall apostatise from the faith, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons speaking lies in hypocrisy, cauterised as to their own conscience, forbidding to marry, bidding to abstain from meats, which God has created for receiving with thanksgiving for them who are faithful and know the truth”. There is subtlety in the enemy’s attack — hypocritical lying, in fact — the suggestion being that, because spiritual things are now revealed, created things are to be despised and even regarded as evil. The object is to undermine, in the hearts of christians, the relationship of creature and Creator and thus, while professing to direct souls into a path of special spirituality, to rob them of all enjoyment, natural and spiritual — to rob them indeed of God Himself as truly known — for if this fundamental relationship is lost, all is lost. Young and earnest souls are especially apt to be caught by these wiles of the devil.

Apart from God’s creatorial power and goodness what is spiritual could not be developed. Our very presence here, with health and ability to listen undistractedly to the word, is the fruit of His care as Creator. “In Him we live and move and have our being” — our very breath is in His hand. It is He who causes the earth to bring forth of its fulness, and who preserves all things in life. “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (1 Timothy 4:4). Ineffable goodness marks all His operations. Who can so

appreciate Him as Creator as those who know Him as now revealed in Christ? For we are let into the secret of His purpose, the reason why He brought the creation into being, and we know what lies behind His purpose — the great truth that God is love.

It is interesting that the heart of God, which is rarely referred to in Scripture, is twice mentioned with reference to His feelings about the creation. In Genesis 6 we are told, “it grieved Him in His heart that He had made Man”, while in Gen. 8 “Jehovah said in his heart, I will no more henceforth curse the ground on account of Man, for the thought of Man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will no more smite every living thing, as I have done. Henceforth, all the days of the earth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease”. It is touching to be told what God said in His heart. His covenant with Noah and the animate creation resulted from it, establishing fixed creatorial conditions in which God’s testimony should be rendered and His work of grace completed.

His faithfulness is stressed in connection with this covenant, the bow in the cloud being the witness to it. He will not fail to maintain seed-time and harvest. He enters feelingly into our need of these things. Even this year men have had their fears as to the harvest, but we can confide in a faithful Creator, who will never break His covenant. This should affect our prayers and our praise. Day by day we can thank Him with worshipping hearts for every creature benefit — sleep, health, food. “Day by day doth He load us with good” (Psalm 68:19). It is He who gives strength for the day. If we bring our knowledge of Him as Father into the matter it only hallows it the more. The Lord Jesus in His teaching (Matthew 5 and 6) connects these matters with our Father who is in heaven and reminds us also of His perfect goodness to all men. “He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust”. His goodness rises above the evil and we are called upon to be like Him, rising in goodness above what is around so as to represent Him here.

We are living in days when, in spite of God’s bountiful provision, millions are in want through the wickedness of man. What scope there is for prayer and intercession that God might alleviate the conditions, restraining the wrath of man, so that the physical needs of His creatures, so abundantly supplied from His side, might be met. Spiritual needs are, of course, our greatest concern, but men need the physical; they need to be preserved in life, so that they may hear the gospel.

The knowledge of God as Creator brings peculiar comfort to the soul in times of persecution. Peter touchingly exhorts those who suffer according to the will of

God to commit their souls in well doing to a faithful Creator. Our first fear at such times is in regard to our 'bread and butter', but "the life is more than food and the body than raiment". Whether we suffer for righteousness' sake or suffer reproach for the name of Christ we can commit our souls (or "lives" as it might be translated) in well-doing to a faithful Creator.

To pass on to the question of government, in covenanting to maintain stable creatorial conditions God had no intention that the world should relapse into the state of anarchy existent before the flood. He therefore introduced magisterial government. This is an immense mercy from God. Why do not conditions relapse into the corruption and violence prevalent before the flood? Because God has set up and supports magisterial government for the punishment of the evil-doer and the reward of them that do well, so that His testimony might go forward. The maintenance of such government in a world of lawlessness is a miracle and it is our privilege to pray continually for its maintenance in every land, and to give thanks to God for it, praying feelingly at the same time for those who are in the positions of authority and responsibility.

Later, in order to limit man's pride and check the working of organised sin, God divided the race into nations. Again, looking on to the present day when the blessing of Abraham should come to the nations in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:14) and later still, after the breakdown of Israel, to prevent national barriers proving disadvantageous to the testimony, He placed imperial government in the hands of Gentile rulers. These rulers have often been marked by great pride, attributing their greatness to themselves. Nebuchadnezzar, the first of them, became lifted up in heart and said, "Behold this Babylon which I have builded" but he had to learn that it was not he, but God, who had established his empire; "that the Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17). God has set up Gentile powers to serve His own purposes and one way in which He has used them is in opening up world-wide highways and communications so that the gospel might have free course.

The Book of Daniel helps us much as to our attitude to these authorities and would help us also to pray intelligently in regard to them. If it is God who changed times and seasons, if it is He who deposes kings and sets up kings (Daniel 2:21), then we can be sure that whatever feature of rule appears it can only serve His purpose. Each of the metals in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents a feature of rule that appeared specifically in the empire to which it relates, but which has remained in measure ever since, and will remain to the end (see Daniel 2:35). Thus, the silver, for instance, represents the feature

of rule that is favourable to God's people and recognises, in some degree, His rights over them. This characterised the Persian Empire but it also represents the attitude of government over a large part of the earth today and we continually thank God for it. On the other hand, the brass represents rule of a profane and ruthless character, seen in the Grecian empire, and very evident in Europe today. God uses such rule to administer necessary chastisement to His people, and to the nations, and will do so to the end, for the king of the north is an instrument of this kind.

How wonderful it is to know that in all these matters the Most High is ruling. He never gives up His control. The creation is His and He never surrenders His rights. He rules in it, though, at present, in an indirect and unseen way and His every act is in view of ultimate blessing. A consideration of these things will bow our hearts in worship before the Blessed and only Ruler, the King of those that reign and the Lord of those that exercise lordship (1 Timothy 6:15). Daniel (Daniel 2:20-23), Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:34-37) and Paul (1 Timothy 6:16) all ascribe honour and might to Him. As in the presence of the might of Gentile empires here, how good it is to be preserved in the assurance that all might belongs to God.

To turn now to the passages in Hebrews, God's activities in creation and government are all to make way for the full expression of Himself in the Son. The speaking in Son does not set aside previous disclosures, but rather fills out all that has gone before. The One who spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets now speaks in the Son, and the One in whom He speaks is the One by whom He made the worlds, which takes our minds right back to the beginning, as do John 1 and Col. 1 also. He is the effulgence of God's glory; all God's attributes — mercy, grace, righteousness, holiness — shine forth in Him. He is also the expression of His substance. What God is in His essential Being is expressed in Him, and we now know that God is love. Love, and nothing but love, has been the motive of all His operations from the very beginning. How wonderfully the "expression of His substance" fills out all the names by which He was previously known! "Almighty" now means, for us, Almighty Love: Jehovah means, for us, Unchanging Love. Similarly fulness is given to the titles Creator and Most High.

The expression of His substance also involves the revelation of His name as Father, for His purposes of love and grace centre in the Son. These purposes, both present and future, as we enter into them give us to understand the reason for creation and the reason for His ways in government. What a blessed end He has ever had in view — to be known by the saints in this day according to what

He is in Himself, that we might be filled to all the fulness of God! He has created all things, we are told, “in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known, through the assembly, the all-various wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him” (Ephesians 3:9-12). As the saints are held and formed by the expression of God in the Son, love’s way, which is wisdom’s way, is expressed in their movements down here toward God and toward one another and thus God’s present purpose, for which He created all things, is reached. How blessed, too, to be in the secret of His future purpose — now so near accomplishment. “His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth” (Ephesians 1:9 and 10).

As we enter into these things we shall desire to render to God His due, in praise and worship, as Creator, as the Blessed and Only Ruler, and as revealed in the fulness of His love and we shall desire to do this continually. Worship should never be absent when we address God, whether privately, householdly, or in a meeting. There may be a tendency to limit it unduly to the Lord’s supper. While the Lord’s supper is the great occasion for worship, and cannot be valued too highly, priestly service is not limited to it; it is to go on continually. Of old there was the continual burnt offering and the continual incense.

How worthy God is of our praise in every character in which He is known! Truly we can say “Great and wonderful are thy works, Lord God Almighty, righteous and true are thy ways, O King of nations”, and above all we can praise Him as now revealed in the Son. May our considerations at this time stimulate our prayers and praise and help us in our testimony.

Gerald Cowell

Address at Highgate, London, 18th October 1941.

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

(The personal testimony of Ulrick Jelinek)

The Bible and science must interpret each other, because God is the author of them both. If there is any disagreement in our minds between them you will find that it is either because there is something wrong with the observation of the facts or the interpretation of them.

Now, generally, what can science do for the christian and what can the christian do for the scientist? In the first place I think that science can confirm and clarify scripture. In 2 Peter 3:10 it says that, “the elements shall melt with fervent heat”. That takes on a new meaning to us now in the atomic age.

I believe that the language of the Bible was the language of the common man. It was written in the culture of the day. I am not of the school of thought that tries to smuggle into the scriptures concepts that are not there. I believe that much harm has been done in the past by that. The Divine guidance in the writing of Scripture lay in the fact that none of the writers tried to interpret what they wrote in the light of the science of their day. Had they done so the Bible would be full of grotesque errors as are many of the books of today.

Now the Bible is not a scientific textbook. If it were it would have needed to be written in terms of final science and it would be a lost book to men of all ages.

Under Divine guidance men did not attempt to interpret what they were told to write. I will give you an illustration of that. In Jeremiah 33 verse 22 there is a very simple statement: “The host of heaven cannot be numbered”. Yet 450 years after Jeremiah made this statement, Hipparchus, the great scientist of his day, said that there were exactly 1026 stars in the universe. One hundred and fifty years later Ptolemy said that there are not 1026 stars in the universe but 1056 stars. He may have looked up on a clearer night! One thousand six hundred and ten years later Galileo invented the telescope and said that there were more stars than this. And as men have developed better and better instruments, they have discovered more and more stars, and as a matter of fact they tell us that in our own galaxy, the Milky Way, there are 270 billion stars.

A couple of years ago I spoke to a group of men at Grand Rapids and I said that we had about 2 million of such galaxies, and I was right up to date. About two months later in the “National Geographic” they gave us the report of the two hundred inch telescope and they said that there are not two million galaxies but

there are trillions of them. So now we can officially say that, “The host of heaven cannot be numbered”. We have just caught up with Jeremiah!

Now what view does the Bible have of science or nature? Number one, the Bible’s view is that God is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. Nature, or science, is a tribute to the majesty, to the wisdom and to the benevolence of God. But science can enhance our concept of the greatness of God.

We have a verse in Psalm 19 which says, “The heavens declare the glory of God”. I never understood that until I spoke to a group of men at Teterboro, Ontario. I was on the atomic energy work up there and the heads of General Electric were there. They took me for a trip through their plant. As I went from department to department I looked at the great big turbines they were building and shipping all over the world and I thought to myself, ‘Now, what are these fellows trying to impress me with?’ And the thought came to me — they were trying to impress me with the glories of General Electric! Then this verse came to me, “The heavens declare the glory of God”.

What kind of trip would it be if God took us through the heavens and showed us His glory? The first stop would be our little solar system, the Sun with all the planets revolving round it. Now, just to give you a measuring stick, the closest planet to the Sun is Mercury, 36 million miles away, which takes 88 days to go round the Sun once. The third nearest planet is our earth, 93 million miles away, which of course takes one year to go round. The farthest planet is Pluto; it is three thousand million miles away and take 248 years to make one revolution.

Someone said, ‘Do you think God is going to allow man to conquer space?’ I said that of course he can go as far as he wants to. But how far can you go? If you wanted to get to the next galaxy you would need to travel at 186,000 miles per second (the speed of light) for 900,000 years! You would be pretty old by the time you got back. And there are billions of such galaxies. You see with our finite minds we cannot even comprehend endless time and endless space. How can we comprehend God? We cannot comprehend spiritual things unless God gives us the ability to comprehend.

I sat and thought about this, “The heavens declare the glory of God”. I said, ‘O God forgive me for being like 99% of christians. All my life I have pulled You down to my concepts.’ As I sat and thought about it I started to worship God for who He is, rather than for what He can do for me. My heart is sick whenever I hear christians say to someone, ‘Well, you receive the Lord Jesus Christ and

you will be happy', or, 'You will be a success in business', or, 'Receive the Lord Jesus Christ and you will go to heaven'. Such a cheap motive for following Christ! Did you ever worship God for who He is rather than for what He can do for you? I did.

Now the Bible says the universe is maintained by the power of God. He sustains the physical, spiritual and moral order. The regularity of nature is a measure of the consistency of God. The laws of nature are the laws of God. There are examples of that. In Genesis 8:22 we have the statement, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease". The seasons must come in their time, God says. Did you ever analyse a statement like that? The sun and the moon and the stars function according to the ordinances that God put there. In Jeremiah chapter 31:35 it says, "Thus sayeth the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night".

But He says in Genesis the seasons must come in their times. What makes the seasons? The revolution of the earth around the sun. There is this great ball, six thousand million, million, million tons, rotating around the sun. It is spinning round its axis at the rate of 1000 miles an hour. It is going round the sun at a rate of 1140 miles per hour, and it is going with the sun at a rate of 780 miles per hour. Three directions at the same time! In its rotation around the sun the earth covers between five and six hundred million miles a year. If it lost only five seconds every million miles, the seasons would be six months out of kilter from Adam's time until now. But God said, 'No, the seasons must come in their time'. Did you know that the earth does not travel in a true circle? As it goes closer to the sun it travels faster and as it travels further away it travels slower. All the planets are exerting a pull on it to get it off course, but in all its travels it does not lose more than a thousandth of a second in a hundred years. Man thinks that he knows something about precision, but compared with God we have not even scratched the surface.

The same God who says that the seasons must come in their time is the God who says that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. God is no less exacting in the spiritual than He is in the scientific. Jesus Christ did not say, 'I am a way'. Science is very exacting — Right? There is only one right way. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way". You can only come to God on His terms. "I am the way" (John 14:6).

In Colossians 1:16-17 it says, “By him” — by the Lord Jesus Christ — “were all things created ... and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist” — or are held together. The holding force of the entire universe is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Centre of it and unless our lives rotate around Him as their Centre, we are out of phase with the entire design of God.

There was a time in my life when I was as ignorant of spiritual things as any heathen. I was so ignorant that I thought that Jesus Christ was the God of the christians and Moses the God of the Jews. Until one day I went to a church service, and there for the first time in my life I heard that I was born in sin, and that I could do nothing about it. Ignorant as I was, I knew instinctively that I needed God. I could not wait for that preacher to stop. I was under such conviction that I went and knelt down and said, ‘O God, forgive me, a sinner’.

I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. This is God’s way. Now let me press this home to you; it is not the church or denomination that you belong to, the job you have in the church, the money you give to philanthropic organisations, the time you spend in christian activity, that will get you anywhere. This is not the basis. You cannot develop by this principle. There is nothing the natural man can do to become spiritual. God has said that you have to come on His terms. And when I came on His terms and recognised myself as a sinner before God, I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour and He put from the outside in, a new life. And this has changed the entire course of my life. It has given me a new motivating force and Jesus Christ is now the Centre around whom my whole life rotates.

Ulrick Jelinek

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