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Living Water

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What is a Christian?

By A. A. Elliott

A reprint of 3 articles printed in recent issues of this magazine

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Living Water — Issue No. 90

November –December 2008

Recent Ministry

Page

THE END	Eric McPhail	1
An address at Chippenham. April 2007		

Poetry Selection

HYMNS OF THE EARLY CHURCH — PART 1

(A selection of some of the earliest hymns in existence and some brief details of their writers.)

HYMN OF THE SAVIOUR	Clement of Alexandria (170 – 220)	9
THE LIVING BREAD	The Didache (2nd Century)	10
LORD JESUS, THINK OF ME	Synesius of Cyrene (365 – 414)	11
EVENING HYMN	Ambrose of Milan (340 – 397)	11
AN APPRECIATION OF CALVARY		12
	Venantius Fortunatus (530 – 600)	

Testimony Section

A WIDOW'S TESTIMONY	Lyudmila Karasik	13
A LIFE-LONG TESTIMONY	William Dobbie	15
Extract from a speech a function at the Bank of England, 16th August 1942		

A voice from the past

FAITH AND HOPE	Charles H. Mackintosh	18
"There are two leading principles in the soul of a Christian..."		

A word for today

THE RESULTS OF GOD'S WAYS WITH US	C. C. Elliott	20
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NOTE. In regard of the extracts from the writings of Bede included in issue number 88, it has come to my attention that the reference on page 14 to the "pre-eminence" of the majesty of Moses and Elias can be read as compromising the distinctive glory of the Lord. It is very much regretted that the passage gave this impression and it was certainly not the intention. I suspect that it was not Bede's intention either.

Ed.

Recent Ministry

THE END

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning"

(Ecclesiastes 7:8)

Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, a wise man, who said, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning". I suppose that is in contrast to what man says. A man would say, "the old is better" (Luke 5: 29). The wise man says, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning". How true it is. J. N. Darby in his poem, "The Man of Sorrows" says:

*'Oh, suited now in nature
For love's divinest ways,
To make the fallen creature
The vessel of Thy praise!'*

God has made the fallen creature the vessel of His praise! Is that not a better end than the beginning? I think so! As we each take account of the way God has reached us in divine grace, we, too, can say, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning". That short phrase encapsulates the way God has come out in overabounding grace to secure us that we might be for the praise of the glory of that grace. It says in the Proverbs that, "the path of the just is as the shining light, going on and brightening until the day be fully come" (Proverbs 4: 18). Surely the end is better.

I have heard this verse in Ecclesiastes referred to at the burial of a believer. How true it is that the end for a believer is better than the beginning. The burial of a person who loves Christ is a dignified matter. There is a treasure that has been in the earthen vessel that belongs to Christ. That treasure has been secured through a history, long or short it may be, but it is precious to Christ. How much better it is for a believer to be beyond all the sorrows of this scene, and the thousand natural ills that the flesh is heir to. How much better to be "absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8), to be "with Christ", which, as Paul says, is "very much better" (Philippians 1:23).

For Paul himself the end was better, as you think of him as the

chief of sinners on the Damascus Road and then as the great servant of Christ in testimony who towards the close of his days could look forward to the crown that was laid up for him.

**God is going
to crown the
end...in glory**

So I would encourage each one of us that the end is to be something far greater than the way we began. We begin as having come short of divine glory (Romans 3:23), as poor, needy souls, but God intends, as we are taken up in divine grace through the work of Christ, that we should go on in a path that is far better. The Spirit of God is the blessed power that it may be so and thus the end is better than the beginning.

What a challenge that is to each one of us today, as to whether we are setting ourselves so that way is made for the Spirit of God in our hearts that there might be a committal in appreciation of love for Christ that would set us on the pathway of testimony and devotedness to Him, so that whether we are alive when He comes or whether we have fallen asleep, the end is better than the beginning. God intends that our way before Him should go on and brighten until the day be fully come. Well, it comes as a challenge to us, but it is not an impossibility.

We need to see that when God speaks of the end it is a time of marvellous result and glory. God is going to crown the end of the dispensation in glory. He is going to display in wondrous triumph what He has done. Those thousands of years of testimony will have an answer. We can be assured that the mission of the Spirit of God in committal and unswerving loyalty to Christ will result in a wonderful triumph for God in a day of display and throughout eternity. These things are real and the future for each one of us is glory. As the hymn puts it:

*'Sealed with the Holy Ghost,
We triumph in that love;
Thy wondrous thought has made our boast,
Glory with Christ above!'*

Let us be stimulated by that. The horizons of this world where men have their ambitions, what they would love to achieve and

so on, get greater at every turn. The believer can rest in quiet confidence by the Spirit of God that better is the end of a thing than the beginning.

The end as seen in the glory of the Harvest

(Psalm 126:5-6)

I think Psalm 126 is a very encouraging Psalm for us at the present time. I want to speak of it, firstly, as it refers to the Lord Jesus. He sowed in tears. The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of His strong crying and tears (Hebrews 5:7). Think of the tears of the Lord Jesus, the tears of a real Man.

How He felt the rejection of His earthly people. He wept over Jerusalem. Think of the sorrow expressed in the words, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children together" (Luke 13:34). He would love to have done that. He is going to come and Israel shall yet see their great Messiah. The triumph and victory of Christ should thrill all our hearts as we think of the time of which we have been singing:

*'Israel's race shall then behold Him,
Full of grace and majesty;
Though they set at nought and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
They in glory
Shall their great Messiah see!'*

What has been sown in tears will be answered in rejoicing when He comes again bringing in the sheaves.

Think of the labours of the Lord Jesus here as a blessed Man, what seed He spread for scattering. He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him, as Peter says (Acts 10:38). There will be a harvest from that. "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). What an end; does the Lord Jesus not rejoice in it?

**The Lord Jesus ...
sowed in tears**

I think that there was rejoicing in His heart when He saw Mary in John 20 and He gave her that message, "go to my brethren and

say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20: 17). He was bringing in the sheaves, his brethren. The sheaves speak of what Christ has secured, the many brethren. Let us understand that the end of divine things is going to be a glorious triumph.

Then the thought in this Psalm may be extended to the labours of those who have served the Lord. Think of the labours of Paul; of his service in Ephesus he says, "I ceased not admonishing each one of you with tears" (Acts 20:31). Paul valued each one there. How precious as you think of him setting the brethren together. Those tears will be answered. You may say, 'Paul, where is your work now?' Even by the time the second letter to Timothy was written some had gone publicly, but the Lord will see to it that there is fruit from these labours; the sheaves will be brought in.

The scattering of the seed at the present time, surely, occurs in the gospel testimony wherever it is rendered. God will have an answer. He has said that His word will not return unto Him void, it will accomplish that whereunto He has sent it (Isaiah 55:11). It is wonderful grace that we have been brought in to enjoy blessing, fruit of the precious scattering of seed, some with tears.

Then there are the labours of those that we know in the Christian company whose concerns and desires have been brought before God, even weeping, recognising public sorrows and breakdown. We can serve one another in this way for I think it is seed for scattering, sown in tears. No concern, I believe, taken before God, maybe tearfully feeling the sorrows of the public testimony, feeling the breakdown and character of the day we are in, will not yield reaping with rejoicing.

As the concerns of God's people and the sorrows of the testimony are understood rightly in the Lord's presence, how great will be the results for Him. Let us be prayerful even at the present time when these public sorrows of breakdown, where man has intruded his mind in the things of God, would cause us to sow in tears. Let us have faith that we may come again rejoicing. Thank God there will be a day when without one shade of variation the result will all be for the glory of Christ.

Oh that we might see more of the scattering of God's seed into good ground and the bearing fruit one hundred fold that we might rejoice in the bringing in of sheaves. May our hearts be encouraged today. Let us not weary in well doing. The end, God will see to it, the labours of His people, the concerns and prayers of believers, will secure something for His heart and for their blessing.

How often we have seen persons take concerns before God and they have never seen the results in this scene but in due time fruit for God has come from it. They will see the result in a coming day, when the public vindication of Christ will be seen and when Divine glory will shine eternally. It will be a time of display, really, of what has been secured from the scattering of seed, of what has been sown in tears.

Paul's end, "to present you a chaste virgin to Christ"

(2 Corinthians 11:1-2)

Paul served his brethren in Corinth. He would gladly spend and be utterly spent, he tells us (2 Corinthians 12:15) for he had respect for their souls. But here he says, "bear with me. For I am jealous as to you with a jealousy which is of God; for I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ". That was an end, that was the goal that Paul had in his heart in relation to the Corinthians. They came behind in no gift yet how carnal they were, as he tells them. Yet he labours, labours and labours again. He does indeed, that he might present them a chaste virgin to Christ. He had something right from the very start in his mind in his letters to them, and it is clear that he had first of all the assurance that God would be with him. God says, "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18: 10). God gave him to understand the extent of divine expenditure in that place, the treasure that was there in that city of Corinth. That treasure was in persons. Paul says, "I have espoused you". He had set himself that the end of his labours in that place and his writing to them would result in what was suitable, exclusively for the heart of Christ.

Do we have this end as our objective for our local companies? Do we have this appreciation of what is suitable to Christ, and are

we each seeking, in our measure, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to set ourselves with that end in mind? With this before us, do we desire that what is suitable for Christ might be formed first in measure in ourselves and then in the local company so that there is something very precious for Christ? Each company and each believer is taken account of by the Lord. The Lord looks for something pleasing to His heart and He would seek to have us, each one, stimulated and concerned that there might be this precious result.

**The blessed end
of the present era
of testimony will
be glorious!**

It needs prayer. It needs committal to the testimony on the part of each one of us. It needs the power of the Holy Spirit that it might be secured. The objective is Christ; the power is the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe that when we set ourselves in that way there will be something for Christ in our local places. We can all be in it in our measure. As coming under the touch of the Lord Jesus, our Lord then our Teacher, we can have this goal before us. What an end it is, "a chaste virgin to Christ". Paul was an elect servant; he had a commission from the Lord that this great end might be secured, but in our measure, we, too, can appreciate and value what is precious to Christ and then in committal to Him, seek help from the Spirit, that these features so pleasurable to Christ are formed in our companies.

Christ will come at the rapture to claim all His own to be with Him for ever. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ will be raised and, together with the believers living at the time of Christ's coming, will be caught up to be with the Lord. Not one will be left out. The Lord Jesus will claim all His own. That is something we should keep before us. The blessed end of the present era of testimony will be glorious!

"Then the end when he gives up the kingdom"

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

1 Corinthians 15 is, I think, one of the most encouraging chapters in the Scriptures. Paul begins with the glad tidings, the power of

the gospel, and then he goes on to speak of the power of the resurrection, then by the Spirit he goes right on to eternity. Such is the appreciation he had of the triumph of God.

We read, "Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father". This speaks of the Lord Jesus, when He gives up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, when He shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He put all enemies under His feet.

Think of the one thousand years of the reign of the Lord Jesus, its supremacy and magnificence. Solomon's reign prefigures it in some way but it is only a figure. Think of the glory of the reign of Christ until He puts all enemies under His feet. Then we read, "The last enemy that is annulled is death". Think of the power of the Lord Jesus annulling the last of enemies. Death and hades, it tells us in the Revelation (chapter 20), are cast into the lake of fire. How glorious to think that the Lord Jesus, our blessed Saviour, is the One who is going to deal with death, the last enemy. Those at the

**the glory of the
reign of Christ**

end of the millennial period who have been held in the awful clutches of death, the wicked dead, will be raised at that time to a resurrection of judgment. It is not spoken of here but it is given in detail in other scriptures.

Here it goes on to say, "But when he says that all things are put in subjection, it is evident that it is except him who put all things in subjection to him". These are very majestic Scriptures and we need the Spirit of God to understand them. Think of the Lord Jesus in a place of subjection - our minds can hardly understand it - and yet it is in view of something wonderful at the end, the absolute end. It says here, "But when all things have been brought into subjection to him, then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him who put all things in subjection to him, that God may be all in all". Well, we are on holy ground. "All things shall have been brought into subjection to him", that is to Christ, "then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him", that is to God, "... who put all things in subjection to him" (that is to Christ) "that God may be all in all".

God will be all in all

That involves the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is the end — God all and in all. Everything filled with the glory of God. It is a wonderful thought to contemplate God all in

all. The triumph of all these thoughts should lift our hearts to the glory of what God will secure. We worship, as understanding the glory of Divine persons. What glory there will be!

There are other Scriptures that refer to what is eternal. "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21: 2). That is the glory of the church, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, that is for Christ, in all the blessed freshness of being the counterpart of that glorious One. There is to be "glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21). Glory to God in the church! Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the assembly. How wonderful to take account of the end.

Is there any thing of man around when we speak of these things? Not a bit. It is all Divine glory that will shine in the most wonderful character throughout eternity. Then the end — 1 Corinthians 15:24, the verse we read, is the absolute, the glorious finality. There will be glory to God in the church, God will be all in all and our hearts will be able to worship the blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout eternity.

These things are beyond us and yet it should bow our hearts freshly at this time, adoringly and worshipfully, that through Divine operations we can have our part in the worship of the blessed God in such a way. Let the greatness and glory of what is ahead lay hold of us. The glory and grandeur of an eternal day is before the believer in Jesus. Through grace we have been secured for God's eternal praise and glory. It bows our hearts in worship even now.

May these thoughts encourage us and lift our hearts adoringly and worshipfully to the blessed God for His name's sake.

Eric McPhail

An address at Chippenham, 28 April 2007.

Poetry Selection

HYMNS OF THE EARLY CHURCH — Part 1

This selection includes some of the earliest Christian hymns in existence. Many of these were translated in the nineteenth century from ancient Greek and Latin by the dedicated labours of such men as John Mason Neale, Edward Caswell and John Ellerton. As a result we have an insight into the appreciation of Christ by believers from the second century and onwards. These were times of persecution by Roman Emperors and later by invading Muslims; Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in 636 AD, and some of the hymn writers were themselves martyred. As we read, or sing, these hymns and see the love for Christ that they express, let us be thankful for their authors and imitate their faith.

1. Hymn of the Saviour

Shepherd of tender youth,
Guiding in love and truth
Through devious ways –
Christ our triumphant King,
We come Thy name to sing,
Hither Thy children bring
Tributes of praise.

Thou art our Holy Lord,
The all-subduing Word,
Healer of strife:
Thou didst Thyself abase
That from sin's deep disgrace
Thou mightest save our race,
And give us life.

Ever be near our side,
Our Shepherd and our Guide,
Our staff and song.
Jesus, Thou Christ of God,
By Thine enduring word
Lead us where Thou hast trod,
Make our faith strong.

Clement of Alexandria (170 – 220)

Translated from the Greek by H. Martyn Dexter (1821 – 1890)

Clement was born in Athens in AD 170 and some time before he was 20 he was converted through the ministry of Pantaeus of Alexandria. In 202 Clement had to flee from Alexandria due to the persecution of the Roman Emperor Septimus Severus. He was martyred in 220.

2. The Living Bread

Father, we thank Thee who has planted
Thy holy name within our hearts.
Knowledge and peace and life immortal
Jesus, Thy Son, to us imparts.

Thou, Lord, didst make all for Thy pleasure,
Didst give man food for all his days,
Giving in Christ the bread eternal.
Thine is the power, be Thine the praise.

Watch o'er Thy church, O Lord, in mercy,
Save it from evil, guard it still,
Perfect it in Thy love, unite it,
Cleansed and conformed unto Thy will.

Translated from the Didache by F. Bland Tucker (1895 – 1984)

The Didache is an anonymous writing on Christian themes, attributed to the 2nd Century AD.

3. Lord Jesus, think of me

Lord Jesus, think of me,
And purge away my sin;
From earthbound passion set me free,
And make me pure within.

Lord Jesus, think of me,
With many a care opprest
Let me Thy loving servant be,
And taste Thy promised rest.

Lord Jesus, think of me,
Nor let me go astray;
Through darkness and perplexity
Point Thou the heavenly way.

Lord Jesus, think of me,
That when the flood is past,
I may Thy eternal brightness see,
And share Thy joy at last.

Synesius of Cyrene (365 – 414)

Translated by A. W. Chatfield (1808 – 1896)

Not a great deal is known of Synesius but he lived in Ptolemais and wrote a number of books, only a few of which have been preserved to us.

4. Evening Hymn

O Trinity, most blessed light,
Blest unity of sovereign might,
As now the fiery sun departs,
Shed Thou Thy beams within our hearts.

To Thee our morning song of praise,
To Thee our evening prayer we raise;
O may our souls for evermore
In lowly reverence adore.

All praise to God the Father be,
All praise, O blessed Son to Thee,
Whom with the Spirit we adore,
For ever and for ever more.

Ambrose of Milan (340-397)

Translated by J. M. Neale (1818 – 1866)

Ambrose was a noted preacher in his day and a true defender of the faith taking a strong stand against both the Arian heresies and pressure from Roman Emperors to influence the church. He encouraged hymn singing, writing a number of hymns himself. In 392 he was forced to flee from Milan.

5. An appreciation of Calvary

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle,
Sing, the ending of the fray;
Now above the cross, the trophy,
Sound the loud triumphant lay:
Tell how Christ the great Redeemer
As a victim, won the day.

Tell how, when at length the fullness
Of the appointed time was come,
He, the Word, was born of woman,
Left for us His heavenly home,
Showed to men the perfect manhood,
Shone as light amidst the gloom.

Thus with thirty years accomplished,
Went He forth obedient still,
Destined, dedicate and willing,
Wrought His work and met His death;
Like a lamb, He humbly yielded
On the cross His dying breath.

Unto God be praise and glory;
To the Father and the Son,
To the eternal Spirit honour
Now, and evermore be done;
Praise and glory in the highest,
While the timeless ages run.

Venantius Fortunatus (530 – 600)

Translated from the Latin by A. F.

Venantius Fortunatus has been described as the foremost Latin poet of his time. He spent most of his life in France and was a friend of the rich and powerful. Later in life he wrote a number of hymns and was Chaplain to Queen Radegunde at Poitiers.

God Willing, a further selection of early hymns will be included in the next issue.

Testimony Section

A WIDOW'S TESTIMONY

“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”

Psalm 50:15

I am a widow with two sons. Praise the Lord that I am now a Christian. Glory to the Lord that He came to seek and save an unworthy lost sinner like me. Ten years ago I was an unbeliever, a teacher in the Minsk Pedagogical Institute, a place where the name of God was never even mentioned. Since childhood our Communist government had taught us that there was no God and that the Bible was a fairy tale for old people.

On 29th January 1989 I was imprisoned for twelve years for a serious crime. It was an awful shame on me as no one in my family had ever been imprisoned. Now I realise that it was in this place that God was going to meet with me, because in 1990 He opened the gates of Gomel Female Prison to allow Baptist Christians to enter and speak to prisoners and spread the gospel amongst us.

I was thrilled to learn that God was able to save the worst of sinners, if they came to Him with true faith in Christ and repentance. How happy I was to know the forgiveness of all my sins, after I was enabled to go to Him with genuine repentance of heart. I called on Him in the day of trouble – with the cry of my troubled heart and crushed spirit, and He delivered me and saved me. I was converted on my 45th birthday. I was joyful to realise that God loved and had forgiven me

and that I was now a new creation in Christ. Though I was in prison, I was free in Christ.

**I was converted on
my 45th birthday**

David describes the person who is forgiven as “blessed” (see Psalm 32:1-2). I learnt that God accepts us not

because of anything in us, but solely because of the perfect life and death of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who has given His life a ransom for our sins. Glory to His name. I was so happy to know that I was restored to a relationship with God that would last throughout eternity, and I was eager to be baptised but this was an impossibility in prison... God knew that our prison administration was very strict and would

not allow us to go outside and He heard our prayers and opened the prison doors to allow foreigners to come in and visit prisoners. In 1991 our Dutch brothers and sisters in Christ visited us... They continued to visit us almost every year afterwards bringing us Bibles and Christian literature to help us and to support, comfort and encourage us. They willingly obeyed God's command to remember those in prison.

During this time the lady Governor of the prison became very ill and the doctors could not help her. We told her that we Christians would pray for her and God heard our prayers and wonderfully healed her. She was so grateful that she allowed us the use of a room and to invite other prisoners to join us in the study of God's word and prayer. We humbly asked our Lord to renew our hearts and minds and that our lives would be transformed into a new life of righteousness. Charles Spurgeon said, 'True prayer is the trading of the heart with God. The saint may expect to discover deeper experience and to know more of the higher spiritual life by being much in prayer'. So we prayed without ceasing.

I became leader of our prison Christian fellowship, seeking to lead other prisoners who had sinned much to the Saviour's feet. Many desired to find peace with God and to know His salvation through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus.

We Christian prisoners tried as much as we could to be the candles of God's light in our dark circumstances and to spread the gospel amongst the inmates and the administration. We wished them to learn about God's way of salvation. It was a real joy to us when many of them were brought to the Saviour.

It was laid on my heart that I would soon be released but the other prisoners did not believe it, saying that none were ever released early from this prison. However, an amnesty was proclaimed and I was released on the 26th February 1999. This was the date of my birthday! It was a miracle of our wonderful God. Now I am free and I hope other Christian sisters in prison, having had a spiritual awakening, will carry the message of Christ's grace and restoring power to the other prisoners with God's help.

I now live in Minsk with my elderly mother who has also come to know the Lord. Though life in the poor economic situation is hard we receive daily God's free grace, strength, power and wisdom and we continue to grow in grace and faith and continue to serve our Lord. I am sure that the Lord will not abandon us two widows.

Lyudmila Karasik

A LIFE-LONG TESTIMONY

General Sir William Dobbie was born on 12th July 1879 in Madras. He joined the Army from the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich on 16th August 1899. He served in the Boer War and had various postings in Bermuda, Ireland and Palestine. In April 1940 he was appointed Governor and Commander in Chief in Malta. The siege of Malta began in June 1940 and for the next two years Malta was subjected to heavy air raids and blockade. For holding out in these circumstances the people of Malta were awarded the George Cross. During the siege it is said that Dobbie's faith was evident to all. He retired from the Army in 1942. He was taken to be with the Lord on 3rd October 1964.

Given below is part of his speech at a dinner at the Bank of England after his retirement from the army.

It is a real pleasure for me to come to meet you here this evening, and it is also a great pleasure to my wife because she has not to do the speaking! I have had the opportunity for the first time of coming inside this building - a well-known place to you but not to me, and I have also been shown some of the things that you have here that are not generally seen...

I suppose it is a platitude for me to say that we are living in very remarkable times – very uneasy times, and I wonder how one would describe in a few words, these days in which we are living. May I suggest, as a fairly apt description, the words of Christ, "And there shall be upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for longing after those things which are coming on the earth". It strikes me as a fairly accurate description. In many parts of the world today there is distress, unrest, fear and dread of the future.

**I have found that
Christ is real**

My message to you this evening is this – that even if that is a fair description of the days in which we live, for the christian there is nothing to fear. I want to tell you from first hand evidence what I have found in my military life. It is a personal experience, and whenever I speak, I find it necessary to apologise for the personal pronoun "I" but it cannot be helped.

I have found in my life, in my Army life, which began forty-three years ago today, August 16th 1899, and even longer than forty-three years, from the time I was a schoolboy at Charterhouse, I have found that Christ is real. He became real to me many years ago, when I was in my

teens, and He has become real to me, increasingly so, ever since. Today I want to pass on to you the knowledge that God is real, and that all we can know is by what we can see and learn of Christ. Christ became real to me when I was in my teens, and He has been real ever since. It is not a question of Christianity. It is the presence of Christ, which is as real in a sense as the fact that you and I are living today. He lived here nineteen centuries ago. He died here and then He rose again from the dead, and that resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the best-attested facts of history. The present Lord Chief Justice of England, the Rt. Hon. Viscount Caldecote, has written a paper on this subject in which he says that as a lawyer he found the evidence for the resurrection of Christ overwhelming. Christ rose again and He is alive today, and He is One with whom we can, and should, become acquainted. In God's great mercy I became acquainted with Him and I have known Him as Saviour and in other capacities too.

Even in those far off days, as they would seem to you, perhaps, when I was at school, I realised that I needed a Saviour because of my sins, and Christ has died to bear my sins on the cross, and I put my trust in Him as my Substitute and Saviour. Since then I have never been able to doubt it. All the difficulties and incidents of army life have not been able to shake the confidence that I had as having put my faith in Christ.

My salvation depends on what Christ has done and not on what I have done – that is the beauty of it, and when I found Him as Saviour, the least I could do was to obey Him, and He became my Lord. Then I have found in peace and in war, at home and abroad, and in all the circumstances and difficulties, that He is not only my Saviour and Lord but He has become my Companion, my Helper and my Friend.

Those who would dream of facing life without Him, do not know what they are missing. Just think of the wisdom that we need to fulfil our duties, and He promises to give us the heavenly wisdom that we need. I have proved it – never once has He let me down. In the War Office in the last war, I had on my table a little card on which was written these words:-

**“If any of you lack wisdom,
let him ask of God and he will give it”**

It is to be found in the 1st Chapter of James. It is a good thing to remind ourselves that wisdom can be had if we ask for it.

Now that is the Person I wish to commend to you this evening, the One I have known and have tried to follow all these many years. I have found to follow Him and to have companionship with Him in one's ordinary every day life, is a practical thing. Looking back on my life I can see His hand upon it. He has never once let me down and He is worth taking into one's life.

I go back to our description of the present day – distress, perplexity, unsettlement, fear and the dread of the future. If we have the presence of Almighty God with us, all these things mean very little. Just think of all the unsettlement there is today – of the institutions that we have been able to count upon in the past, so many have been taken away, and people wonder whether and when it is coming to an end, but there is a firm foundation on which you can build.

There is a story in the New Testament about two men, one who built his house upon a rock, and when the waves and the storm came, the house stood fast, but the other man built his house upon the sand, and his house was swept away. May I commend my Lord and Saviour to you as the only One who gives the sure foundation on which you can build? How satisfying it is to know that through trusting in Christ the whole of our past is settled, when we realise and accept the fact that all our sins have been blotted out by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we come to the present. We can be sure of God's help all the time we need wisdom and guidance and help. What a thing it is to be sure about. Then we come to the future and we find that is sure too. Who would not want to have that Saviour and Friend as his or her own? He has come into our lives in His own way, by becoming our Saviour and then Lord and Companion. The foundation which He provided is a sure one.

We have all had plenty of unsettlement, and we have wondered why all this is allowed to happen. We cannot understand it and yet we can be quite sure that God is the Ruler of this universe and that His plans and purposes are being worked out. He has some grand purpose for the world that He is going to fulfil very soon

Then we have this word 'Fear'. Do you remember the Psalm we often sing in our churches, and sometimes repeat to ourselves at home? "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea". Exactly what those words mean you can try and imagine for yourselves, but in spite of the great trouble,

“therefore will we not fear”. Why should we fear? God is our God and He will remain our God right to the end. He is stronger than anyone, and He will look after the interests of His people. But He does not say that He will not allow them to go through trouble and hardship, and even death. But He is behind it all, and will never leave us – “therefore will we not fear”. We cannot fear when we realise that we have Him behind us. That thought has been with me many times in these last few years. Often when things were difficult out in Malta, I have repeated to myself those three verses that I have quoted and I have found that it is a fact that God can remove fear when we cast our eyes on Him and not on the difficulties around.

I have spoken long enough and my object has been to tell you what a wonderful Friend I have found in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have tried Him, I have proved Him and He has never been wrong: and what He has done for me He wants to do for you, if you will allow Him. He wants to clear you from your sins through the shedding of His precious blood, and having done that, to help you by His presence and His wisdom, His counsel and guidance, and to help you in every way until the end of the story. The end is very wonderful. It is written: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him”.

Well, I want to commend Him to you as the solution to all the present difficulties of this life at this present time.

William Dobbie

Speech at a dinner at the Bank of England, 16th August 1942.

Thanks is due to Mrs Haddad for providing this testimony.

A Voice from the Past

FAITH AND HOPE

There are two leading principles in the soul of the Christian, which make God the special object. These are “faith and hope” There is a marked distinction between these two principles.

- Faith takes what God has given
- Faith rests in holy tranquillity in God's statements about the past
- Faith is a recipient

- Hope expects what He has promised
- Hope goes forth in active longings after the future
- Hope is expectant

**If faith be
wavering,
hope will be
flickering**

Now, it will be found that in proportion to the vigour of faith will be the vigour of hope. If we be not fully persuaded that what God has promised He is able also to do, we shall know but little of the power or energy of hope. If faith be wavering, hope will be flickering. If faith be strong, hope will be strong also; for faith imparts strength and intensity to the expectation.

Thus the soul, in the happy exercise of these principles, is like a climbing plant that, striking its roots downward into the soil, sends forth its tendrils along the nearest wall or tree. So the soul finds its root in the eternal record of God, while it sends forth the tendrils of an imperishable hope to grasp tenaciously the faithful promise of God; and, we may say, the deeper the root, the stronger the tendril.

The patriarch Abraham is a happy example of all this; his "faith and hope" were truly "in God":-

- He had been promised the whole land of Canaan, where he had not so much as set his foot on it;
- He had been promised a seed like the stars of heaven, or like the sand by the seashore, when as yet he had no child.

Neither his faith nor his hope could have drawn any strength from circumstances, for everything within the range of mortal vision argued against him. But the promise of "the Almighty God" was quite enough for the man of faith. With nothing but that, he started forth as a pilgrim and a stranger, having no foundation for his hopes that could at all be recognized by "flesh and blood." Abraham had heard a voice which the children of this world could not hear, even the voice of the "God of glory", calling him forth from the midst of his worldly circumstances to be a "prisoner of hope". The Lord had directed his thoughts upward — He had called him from earth to heaven — from the earthly Babel to the heavenly Jerusalem — from the baseless city of man to the well-founded city of God.

Thus was it with all the patriarchs and witnesses whose honoured names the Spirit has recorded, for our encouragement, in Hebrews 11. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They died as they had lived, "prisoners of hope". An unbelieving world might scoff and sneer at them, and wonder why they had given up the

apparently substantial realities of earth, to live and die without anything; but their "faith and hope" were in God, and not in circumstances. Faith enabled them to rest upon the record of God, while hope carried them onward into the future, and converted it into the present.

So the Christian today is likewise to be a "prisoner of hope". Looking at the believer in one aspect of his character, he is like the Israelite on the night of the first Passover. He is within the blessed circle of peace in which redemption has placed him, feeding on the Lamb whose blood had secured his peace; with girded loins, waiting for the first beams of the morning, to leave the land of Egypt (a land of death and darkness) and to proceed on his way toward the land of rest.

The believer in Jesus, resting in the atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ, is privileged to look forward to the "morning without clouds", entering into all the fruits of redeeming love. Thus, the believer is a prisoner of hope. His faith reposes on the cross — his hope feeds upon the rich pastures of God's prophetic record. His spirit travels over a course of which the cross is the starting-point, and glory the goal.

Charles. H. Mackintosh.

A Word for Today

THE RESULT OF GOD'S WAYS WITH US

**Psalm 72: 1-3,
: 17-20**

This passage is one of several to which I hope to refer. Before I came here, I was feeling concerned as to the final effect of God's ways with us.

The passage I read is at the end of the second book of the Psalms. The Psalms are divided into five books and each book ends with an ascription of praise in one form or another. I will refer to them in detail to show this. This passage at the end of the second book gives one of the most complete ascriptions of praise to God.

The first book of the Psalms ends at Psalm 41; in that Psalm we see the really godly man betrayed. It looks on, of course, to the betrayal of the Lord. The Psalmist says, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I confided, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against

me" (Psalm 41:9). The Psalm that depicts these trying circumstances ends with: "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! Amen and Amen". The end brought about by the pressures of that section is that glory ascribed to God. That is the end to be reached of all pressure and exercise before God, however unpleasant or trying the circumstances may be; the soul has learnt to trace God in it all and to bless God for it.

The second book of Psalms ends with the blessed revelation of God's king in Psalm 72. God now reveals His king, and the earth is blessed. With this ending of God's ways we get a fuller ascription of praise than in the previous book, for Christ is brought in. "Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things! And blessed be his glorious name for ever! and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen". The whole earth will be filled with His glory. God alone is worthy of glory — no man can claim it; glory all belongs to God. When we see that, it shows that we realise that we all work in a great plan; it is not merely our own blessing, but God's glory.

In the last Psalm of the third book (Psalm 89), we see that though God had chosen David, his family failed, but that despite the failure of what God has set up, He is going to establish His purpose: "Thy seed will I establish for ever" (v. 4), and the end is reached in verse 52: "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore! Amen and Amen".

The next ending (the end of the fourth book) is in Psalm 106:48. This Psalm is descriptive of God's faithfulness, and the people's unfaithfulness. Now there is an additional thought — the people are under exercise, but fail, yet God blesses them and they are called upon to say "Amen". Whatever failures there are, or have been, the end is reached and God is blessed. "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! And let all the people say, Amen! Hallelujah!" At the end of the last book of the psalms the world to come is reached and there is a burst of praise to God. Exercises are over, and the end is reached in a beautiful and sustained overflow of praise.

The same principle can be illustrated from the life of the Lord Jesus. When He had gone through a great deal in the way of service and when He seemed to have spent His strength in vain, instead of

The whole atmosphere of Christianity is one of praise and thanks to God

turning away in sulkiness, the perfect Man thanks God: "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them to babes" (Matthew 11:25).

I could illustrate it with an even more wonderful passage: "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises" (Hebrews 2:12). The Lord passed through all the suffering and forsaking of Calvary, and now we hear His voice joining in praise in the assembly. God's end is reached!

Now I want to say a word as to the result of individual exercise on the same line. When Paul speaks of his conversion, he describes God's grace to himself: "Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the first" (1 Timothy 1:15). Then he breaks forth: "Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen" (v. 17). We see how as an individual he had experienced God's wonderful mercy and he returns glory to God for it. God's end had been reached in that way, because he ascribes glory to the blessed God who came out to him in grace.

The whole atmosphere of Christianity is one of praise and thanks to God. It would be impossible to go over all the passages in the New Testament that show this. Christianity brings real joy into our hearts. Righteousness, peace and joy are the very elements of the kingdom. God's object is that there should be an intelligent response from His creatures. The end of God's ways is reached when the whole universe responds to what He is as revealed.

In the world to come we find two great results described. The one is that the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth: that is, light has come out from God and God is known. The other is that the glory of the Lord will fill the earth — there will be an intelligent response in praise to His glory.

We find this wonderful response ringing through all the New Testament. Take the epistle to the Romans; when Paul is declaring

all God's wonderful ways in reconciling the promises to the fathers with the showing of grace to the Gentiles, he breaks out in praise as to what God has been doing: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! ... For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:33-36). Paul had real appreciation of what God had done, not merely that he knew it, but it had so affected his heart that he was able to respond intelligently to God. God's end was reached in him. Later, in Romans, Paul ascribes glory to God when he takes a view of the mystery and gives glory to God in view of it. "The only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 16:27).

Paul is very appreciative, too, of all that God is doing with regard to His work. So Paul begins many of his epistles by giving thanks to God for all that he finds commendable in those to whom he is writing. There are few more wonderful things than God's work in believers. God is able to take up and form a person, so that instead of trying to show themselves off in pride and conceit, they are living here in a humble way for God's glory. It is well for us to consider and give thanks to God for His work in His own. It is a very happy thing to take account of. In 1st Corinthians even, Paul could begin by giving thanks; he saw that which was good, though he corrected the bad. He gives thanks to God frequently for the Thessalonians in view of the reality of God's work in them and that they were not turned aside. It is a happy thing to be so in accord with God's thoughts as to be continually giving thanks.

The apostle makes a similar remark in regard to an individual and a company. Of the Philippians he said: "I thank my God for my whole remembrance of you" (Philippians 1:3); he was filled with joy that they were going on well. Paul exemplified this spirit of joy. At the beginning of his work, in Philippi, he sang praises in the prison, and now his heart can still rejoice.

He makes a similar remark to Timothy: "I am thankful to God...how unceasingly I have the remembrance of thee" (Timothy 1:3). Paul was wonderfully in keeping with God's thoughts for His people.

Turning to the collective side, Paul takes the same blessed attitude — he blesses God for what he was about to write to the Colossians:

"Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12). He associated himself with the Colossians, showing that the truth had come in power into his own soul. Likewise in Ephesians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). He not only knew the fact but had so got hold of it in his soul that he was able to bless God for these blessings. Then, further, "he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for adoption...to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Ephesians 1:4-6). Sonship is the most wonderful blessing introduced in Christianity, and it, too, is to rebound to the glory of God. It lends peculiar character to Christian privilege.

There are a great many other instances I could refer to but I would like to conclude by referring to the book of Revelation. If we read the book carefully we find thirteen passages that call for, or directly ascribe, praise to God.

God's purpose is reached in the different companies shown in the Revelation in what He is doing, has done, or is about to do. The most intelligent company is the heavenly company, who are qualified through the trials and exercises that they have passed through down here, fully coming up to God's thought for them.

To guard this I should say that you do not get exactly in words a worship song in the present dispensation. We worship now in "spirit and truth"; you do not get a sample of the expression of the worship of sons — we should quite likely make wrong use of it if it were put in scripture. The power for worship is in the Spirit of God, and the relationship for worship is also there. Similarly, the Lord taught His disciples to pray, but what we pray is not written now.

In Revelation chapters 4 and 5 we find various circles and a series of companies from the elders down, so educated by what God has passed them through or taught them, that they are praising Him. As you review the various companies, those who pass through tribulation and overcome the beast yield praise to God (see Revelation 7 and 14). They have gone through much, and have come to the end of

God's ways with them, have understood them, and they praise God.

As a last example, when great Babylon is judged it is most extraordinary how widespread are the various circles of praise (see Revelation 19). All are so thankful that the terrible system is gone in judgment — not rejoicing in judgment but in the clearance of evil. God is greatly concerned as to reality, and He values real bridal response to Christ so much that there is joy in heaven and earth when anything that imitates it is judged and removed.

Any sense of what is due to Christ gives joy, as Christ is infinitely precious to God. God is training us to appreciate Christ, what He is in Himself, and what He is to God; and if God has been pleased to work among mankind to produce those who shall be Christ's companions for all eternity, what must He think of Christ and the church?

It is most important to get a right idea of what God is doing now. He is forming the bride, the recipient of Christ's affections and the sharer with Christ of God the Father's love. What does He expect from that company? An intelligent response to all God is doing - understanding all, and responding to it in worship and adoration. There is not much outwardly at present, but God is training souls to appreciate Christ. He does it through trials and difficulties, by the light He gives us, and by the Holy Spirit. Are we conscious of our destiny? Not only shall we be individually like Christ, but we are to be part of that vessel "having the glory of God" (Revelation 21:10). That is what the church is for, and if we are intelligently in the sense of it there will be the proper kind of worship now.

The result of all God's ways with us is not only that we have light, but that we so appreciate it, that we may be able to give glory to Him whether in connection with the wilderness or in connection with our heavenly privileges. "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

C. C. Elliott

Abridged address at Rochester, USA, June 1921