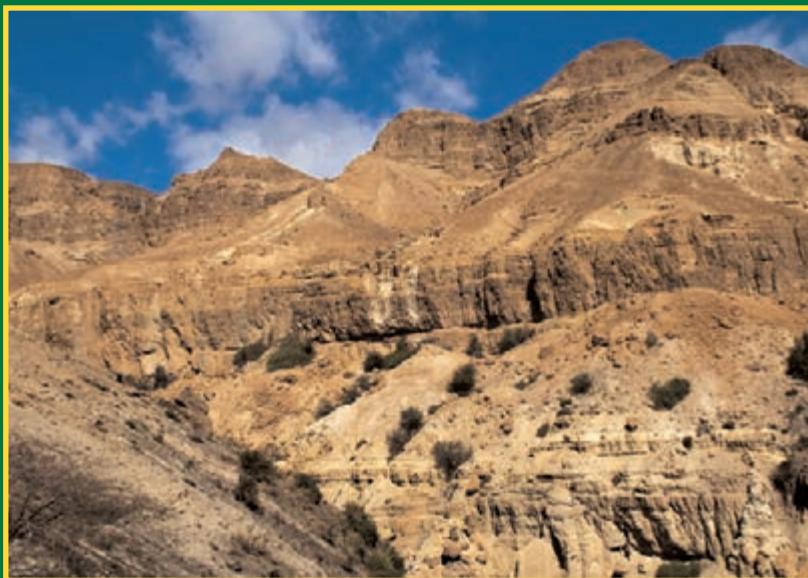


Scripture Truth



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Be a prayer-bulldog!
Tolerance or grace?

The attack on heaven
The worth of the Lamb
The indwelling of the Holy Spirit

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Tolerance or grace?

Is God a God of tolerance? Newspapers recently reported a prominent churchman as defending the right of a well-known atheist to blaspheme God. The churchman argued that the atheist's right to blaspheme is implicit in the freedom to choose that was conferred in creation.¹

We would all agree that the Christian response to blasphemy must be temperate, and absolutely not violent. However the issue is not our response to blasphemy, but God's.

"Ability to choose" is not the same as "right to choose". When Adam and Eve exercised their ability to choose to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, the penalty was death (Genesis 2:17). That doesn't sound like a "right to choose".

However, not even the guilty pair died that literal day, but some 900 years later (5:5). God didn't exact of Cain the punishment he deserved (4:11-15). He continued with the same mankind after the Flood even although its heart hadn't changed at all (8:21ff). All this was *grace*. Israel was then lifted out of the mass of mankind and placed under a regime wherein, if kept, man would have glorified God in every sense as he ought. Idolatry and blasphemy within the land of Israel, whether by an Israelite or by a stranger, were punishable with death (Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 13:1ff).

But God did not so deal with the nations of the world. "The times of this ignorance God winked at" (Acts 17:30, KJV). He continued to visit the heathen with the Noahic blessings (14:17). And even the severity of the Law upon Israel was early mitigated in the case of the golden calf (Exodus 32:14; 33:15-17). And the grace shown then was as nothing compared to the grace that "we all" – Jew and gentile – have received in Jesus Christ (John 1:16f). Paul the blasphemer was himself the epitome of it (1 Timothy 1:13f).

But grace has *repentance* in view (Romans 2:4), and it has a time-limit (2 Peter 3:9-10). "The Lord came... to convict all the ungodly... of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14f, RV). The "Man of grace" said, in "the Gospel of grace", "These mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). God is God. Grace should never be confused with tolerance.

THEO BALDERSTON

¹ E.g. *The Times*, London, 5th February 2015, p.5.

Healthy Families:

2. Walking in truth

David Hughes

Some more pithy advice for spouses!

John's second letter is unique in the Bible in being a letter written specifically to a woman. If we accept this,¹ certain notable lessons *for families* follow from this little letter.

In a previous article we could observe how much John appreciated the fact that his correspondent valued the "truth", central to which is the gospel. This created a bond of affection between himself and her and her family. It is good when this also happens today, particularly in our local churches. John also wanted the consequences of the gospel – grace, mercy, and peace – not just to be a past and rather dead fact to them, but to be a present and future reality ("grace... will be with you" – 2 John 3, NKJV). If it is, it will transform family relationships. "The truth" causes families to encourage each other to pursue love (v.5) among themselves and with others.

These were, we might say, the positive, relationship-transforming effects of the "truth". But there were dangers for this lady and her family. There were people doing their best to get to this family and lead them away from the truth. How was she to respond to these dangers and guard her family? John highlights at least two crucial aids: Knowing the truth, and Christian fellowship. Do we value the constant, encouraging, face-to-face meeting with other believers who can encourage us in "the truth"?

Healthy families value the truth

John warns that there are deceivers around who teach false things about Jesus (v.7). In John's day these were mainly people called Gnostics who denied that Jesus was really God's Son. They claimed that some kind of God-like spirit descended on Jesus at His baptism and left Him just before He died. But it's not true. Jesus, the Son of God, really did come "in the flesh", i.e. as a man. Anyone who teaches false things about who Jesus was and is, is a false teacher. John says worse than that. They are deceivers and antichrists. They were a sign that the people were living in the last days. John's best advice for this Christian lady and her family is, "Look to yourselves" (verse 8). Don't lose what you already know!

¹ Although some authoritative expositors consider that John was writing to a church under the form of a "lady", other equally authoritative expositors consider that John was writing to an actual "lady" and her children. The latter is the standpoint of this article.

“Abide in the doctrine of Christ” (v.9). John’s advice to this woman to ensure she didn’t allow herself to be deceived by falsehood was that she keep reminding herself of the truth.

I think that in this connection it is most significant that this letter was written to a woman. It’s vital that women know the truth! Of course it’s vital that men know the truth as well, but I think this is more often assumed in our churches today. Some commentators assume the lady’s husband must have died, or not have been a Christian, because, they say, if he were around he would have been given this instruction to look out for his family. That might be true, but I don’t think it needs to be. It’s just as vital that women know the truth as men. Do our churches promote this? Are we encouraging all of our people to know and love the truth? For this woman the advice was especially relevant. She needed to know the truth so she could not only guard herself but also her children. The more you know the truth, the more you will be able to protect your family and friends from deceivers who teach false things. How can you refute the false if you don’t know the truth?

It’s no good if my children see that Mum and Dad don’t know the Bible and don’t take a serious interest in trying to read it, learn it better, and live out the things they learn. What message does that send? It’s no good when children think Mum doesn’t know anything and they’ll ask Dad all the “spiritual” questions. A woman who knows the truth and abides in it is a blessing to her family, and also more widely to the church.

I just want to labour this point a little bit more. Sometimes I have sat in meetings and heard preachers say things like, “for the young men here,” or, “for the preachers here” – and then told them to go and study something. Why just the young men? Why just the preachers? Can I suggest to you that if you’re not a young man or preacher, and you ever hear a preacher say that, just ignore it, and go and study it anyway. You need to know that truth just as

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much as any young brother or any preacher. It's vital that all of us know the truth and abide in it. Women who know the truth are a real help to the brothers who do the preaching because they can tell them when they get things wrong. They can tell me when I've missed the point. They can tell me of some other verse that links nicely with something I've said. They can help me when I don't understand something. Don't we want women like that in our assemblies? Are we encouraging it?

So let me ask all of you, male or female, what are you doing to learn the truth? Clearly we're not all going to know everything the Bible says. None of us does. But how hard are we trying to get to know the truth better than we do at the moment? Healthy families value the truth. How can my family – and yours – value the truth? Some suggestions that are neither exhaustive nor exclusive might be helpful. Could I have family discussions about spiritual things sometimes? Could we read the Bible together? Could I make more time to read the Bible on my own each day and think about what I read? Could we talk about how the Bible speaks to some situation my family goes through? Could we buy helpful commentaries to help us understand the Scriptures better? Could I find some helpful talks to listen to or articles to read in Christian magazines or websites? Could I find teaching meetings to attend? Could I write some questions down about the passages I read in a week and find some other believer to ask these questions of, so I can learn?

Clearly Bible knowledge on its own is not the aim (although it's certainly a good start – I don't know any good reason for not taking Bible study seriously). It's important to let what we learn affect our lives and change us. Is my family one that values the truth? Is yours?

Healthy families guard against danger

In addition to knowing the truth and abiding in it, John tells this lady to be careful who she allows into her house (v.10). If there is someone who is teaching wrong things about who Jesus is then she is not to even let them into her house. She is not to say goodbye to them. If she did she would be sharing in their evil deeds. Hospitality is clearly an important part of Christianity. But in such serious cases this woman was not to show any hospitality at all. She was to have nothing to do with such serious error. Now clearly this is not the normal behaviour for us to adopt with anyone with whom we disagree. It's not a reason for me to bar you from my house that you feel 2 John is really addressed to a church rather than an individual lady. We can disagree on that and still happily sit down and have dinner together. But I have to guard and make sure that serious false teaching doesn't get a hearing in my house. How careful am I about what opinions make it into my house – whether from someone at the door or from something on the TV or internet? Do I guard my family against false teaching

about Jesus from people claiming to be Christians? Will I be like this woman, and protect my family and point them towards the truth and away from evil? Healthy families guard against danger.

Healthy families value face-to-face presence in the church

John wanted to see this lady. He had more he wanted to say to her. But he wanted to say it face to face. That is generally good advice. If possible, much better to talk in person with someone. Words can be misconstrued in an email, or even over the phone. But John also said that he would have much joy in seeing her again, and believed she reciprocated this feeling.

John lived at some distance from the lady and would have to travel in order to meet her “face to face.” But we can challenge ourselves from his words about our attitudes towards the Christians nearest to us in terms of distance – those in our own assembly. Do I look forward to seeing them? Do I value their presence and miss them when I don’t see them? Do I value face-to-face contact more than listening to an online sermon or reading a book? Is my family characterized by this? This Christian lady was obviously appreciated by her nieces and nephews who sent their greetings. I wonder what affect I have on other believers? Would they be pleased to see me and value my presence?

So then, healthy families walk in the truth. As the previous article showed, they value friendship in the church, they value the gospel, and they pursue love, and love the truth. They guard against dangerous influences and value bodily presence in the church.

How healthy is my family? How healthy is yours? May the Lord help us as together we try to live healthy lives, walking in the truth, celebrating the grace, mercy and peace that He has shown to us!

*How careful
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Be a prayer-bulldog!

J. Northcote Deck

“The weapons of our warfare are... mighty to the pulling down of strongholds

(2 Corinthians 10:4, KJV),

“Praying... always in the Spirit ...and watching thereunto ...with all perseverance”

(Ephesians. 6:18).

This article was reprinted in Scripture Truth, vol.7 (1915) pp. 340ff, from the writer's Monthly Missionary Letter, under the title, "The function of prayer." There are a few abridgments. Dr Deck was a pioneer in missionary work in the Solomon Islands.

The artillery of prayer

In the recent fighting in France a strong position had to be taken. The enemy's lines were so defended by trenches, parapets, and barbed wire that any assault, however determined, by whatever number of men, must have failed. [...] But the attacking general had collected large numbers of the most powerful artillery, firing the most powerfully explosive shells.

With this excessive strength of massed artillery a continuous fire was kept up for over five hours on the one objective till the trenches were blown in, palisades thrown down, and wire entanglements blown to pieces. Then, when the artillery had done its work, the waiting troops were at last able to go up, “every man straight before him,” and, with comparatively little loss, to capture the position.¹ What had been absolutely impossible to them before had been made possible by the sustained fire of the artillery.

I believe this is a most accurate and instructive picture of spiritual warfare. There are positions of the adversary that cannot be stormed or starved. There are obstructions which effectually bar the progress of the most devoted members of God's great missionary army. Before such can possibly succeed there is necessary the sustained and continuous fire of the artillery of prayer. Nothing else will take its place. Nothing will avail until it has done its work.

The sooner this is recognised the sooner we shall learn to put first things first. Too often, in the absence of prevailing prayer, the assault has to be made without support and precious lives are sacrificed, time is lost, and all efforts are in vain – not because God is unfaithful, or the servant is not devoted – but because the artillery of prayer has been lacking, and no breach has been made in the enemy's

¹ This analogy of course draws on early uses of the method of preliminary artillery bombardment that became the rule on the Western Front in the First World War. The trouble with it is that very shortly the method achieved practically nothing. However the lesson drawn is excellent!

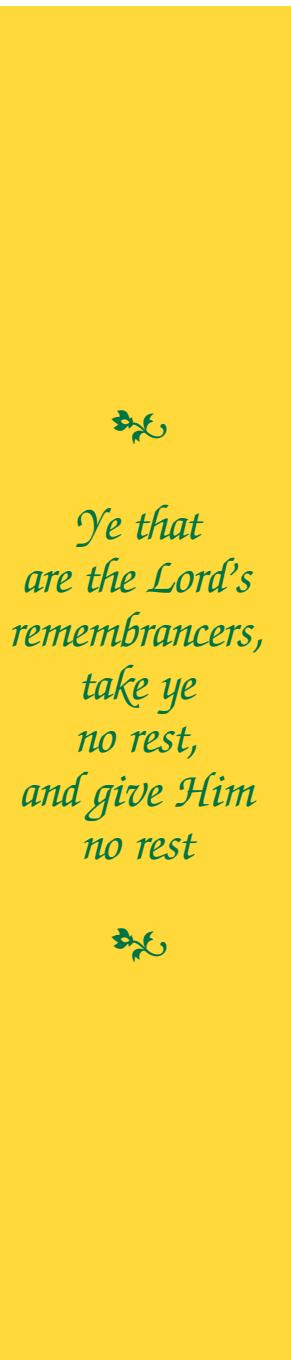
defences. This holy war is a war of munitions, and of these there has been at times a tragical shortage. "To your tents. O Israel!" has too often been sounded in the church's ears, while the cry of the great Captain of our salvation still rings out, "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest" (Isaiah 62:6-7, RV).

We must have recourse to prayer. That is the only weapon which may prevail. It seems to me that the failure of an attack is often more reflection on the intercessors than on the attackers. The sooner we realize the all-important function of prayer the sooner we shall learn to put first things first, and to be resolved that in our lives, at least, nothing shall be allowed to usurp its place; and that we will not allow ourselves to be so cumbered with other clamant duties that prayer is crowded out.

The Honourable Company of the Intercessors

In England there is an historic body of men known as the Honourable Artillery Company. Positions in this brigade have long been greatly coveted and hard to obtain. For their function is the all-important one of breaking down the enemy's defences. They have their counterpart in God's great army of occupation, which contains a body of saints who have an equally important and essential function to perform. These might well be called the Honourable Company of the Intercessors. Their numbers, alas! are far too small, their ranks too thin.

This service, in spite of its honour, is little sought after. For the great bulk of God's children are so short-sighted – indeed, so blind to spiritual warfare – that they cannot follow the flight of the projectiles of prayer, nor realize the effect they produce. Yet God will give the sight of the seer to those who desire it, that at last we may realize the function and the urgency of prevailing prayer. This work of breaking down the walls and effecting a breach has got to be done. It is going to be done.



*Ye that
are the Lord's
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take ye
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and give Him
no rest*

Throughout the Word of God the greatest emphasis is laid upon waiting

Praying aloud is the best corrective for wandering thoughts

But is it going to be done by you? All cannot be great preachers or teachers. But I do not see anything in God's Word that would prevent the humblest saint from becoming a great intercessor. Praying may be hidden service, yet it is none the less honourable. It is a service, too, with which many might be trusted, for it does not expose us to the deadly chill of popularity and applause. How often we ask for power from God that we might do greater things, when He would rather give us weakness, that we might do better things! Recruits for this service are needed; never so much as to-day!

Speaking as a learner to other learners, the best way to become a true intercessor, to learn to really pray, is to do it; to make a definite and sober beginning. We need not be so much concerned at first about knowing how to pray. We need to be intensely concerned about giving God a chance to *teach* us how to pray. Being then convinced that prayer is the greatest essential to holy living and effective ministry, it is wise to decide that by His grace we will devote a certain definite time each day to waiting on God in intercession. As a writer has said, "God's acquaintance is not learned by pop calls."²

Time is needed. Throughout the Word of God the greatest emphasis is laid upon waiting. There is something peculiarly healthful to the soul, and effective with God, in waiting. If we are too busy to wait, then we must at once abandon the most effective service of the soul for God. Such waiting is toilsome at first, but soon becomes a pleasure. [...] Praying aloud is the best corrective for wandering thoughts.

The one paramount essential, however, to power in prayer, is, of course, and must always be, the enduement of the Spirit. He must be in charge. He must be not Guest, but Guide; be not on the threshold, but on the throne. With His enabling, we shall have repeated the experience of the disciples: "When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 4:21). Then, indeed, will

² E.M.Bounds, *Power Through Prayer*, (London, 4th edn., 1912) chapter 7. A "pop call" was "a short visit".

our weapons become “mighty to the pulling-down of strongholds,” for He is the first pre-requisite to power in prayer.

And “watching thereunto”

In inciting our converts round the Islands to persistent prayer, I have often used the illustration of a yam garden. How does an Islander grow yams? Does he take a bagful and roam through the forest pushing in one here, one there [...], never to know where they are planted, never to return to tend them and watch their growth; never at the last to gather them and feast his heart upon them? Surely reaping no resulting fruit, he would soon tire of planting yams. Yet that is just how many children of God sow where they never reap, make a duty of what might be a joy, and soon tire of praying.

They stand up with petitions so vague and indefinite that they could not recognise the answer were it given. Or they plant a prayer for some definite object, and straightway go away and forget all about it; so that like the yam planted and abandoned in the forest, it is never reaped by the sower, it never gladdens his heart and impels him to further planting. No, I have never seen Islanders plant yams like that. They are too practical. Yet I have heard many pray like that. An Islander grows yams to obtain the fruit. He chooses the place with care, clears it, and plants his yams with skill. He marks it off with fences, that he may know his own yams. Day by day he visits them and tends them. The first green sprout of promise gladdens his heart, and incites him to further care and loving attention. He gathers his harvest, and, encouraged by the fruit of his toil, never fails to go on planting and reaping.

That, too, is the way of fruitful prayer: above all, to be definite. To choose the subjects of our prayer with care, waiting upon God to guide our minds to ask for those very things He wishes to give. [...]. Seven subjects of prayer, thus carried through to fruition, are more incentive to go on praying, than seven hundred begun and abandoned. It is the derelict prayers of the saints that discredit the power of intercession.

Pessimists in Prayer

But many of God’s people are pessimists in prayer. A pessimist is one who habitually looks on the dark side of things, who counts the discouragements, and discounts the deliverances. Applied to human affairs, it is excused that, “If you expect little you will not be disappointed.” But such a state of mind, such an outlook and expectation applied to earthly things, is apt to become habitual, and unconsciously become our attitude towards spiritual things as well. Thus there is adopted a God-dishonouring attitude that undermines the expectations of faith and causes prayer with many of God’s children to become a power unavailed of. God has no use for pessimists in prayer. “Ye have not because ye ask not” (James

4:2) is the Spirit's explanation of the usual poverty of soul. Expect great things from God and you will get them.³ Surely, then, seeing we have the resources of the Saviour on which to draw, we may safely be the most habitual optimists in prayer. For abiding in Him, being led out by Him in intercession, we shall not be confounded.

With Perseverance



*A pessimist
is one who
counts the
discouragements
and discounts
the deliverances*



*Oh, Lord,
make us
bulldogs
in prayer!*



Yet, on the other hand, some prayers, like some plants, mature slowly. At times the husbandman needs patience (James 5:7). The most precious fruits of intercession must often be attended "with perseverance." In the Islands we have a class of native dogs that suffer from chronic starvation. As might be expected, they have little spirit, so that when they take hold of anything it does not need much to drive them off and to discourage them. They have often afforded an apt illustration for our converts of the way many men take hold in prayer. And I have told them how bulldogs, when they catch hold, will die almost before they let go. Many a time since then, an Islander, ever quick at parable, has prayed: "Oh, Lord, make us bulldogs in prayer!" Such, indeed, are the intercessors who are needed in the church to-day: men who will cry with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (13:15, KJV). Men who will set their faces to pray on with unwavering faith for years, in quiet confidence that what God has laid upon their hearts to ask He is certain in the end to give when patience has had her perfect work. *Bulldogs in prayer! How many of us could be described like that!*

³ "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14). The salvation of souls is always His will (2 Peter 3:9), so it is always right to pray perseveringly for the salvation of souls. But what about (e.g.) the distressing case of a child who prays earnestly and unremittingly for the salvation of a parent, without visible result – ever? The child must rest simply in the promise, "he hears us." And we do know that God's word will fulfil the purpose to which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

Alpha People

Jael

George Stevens

“Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent” (Judges 5:24, KJV).

Jael was the wife of Heber, and presumably a Kenite like her husband. The Kenites could trace their ancestry back to Hobab, the father- [or brother-] in-law of Moses (Judges 1:16), so they were kin to the descendants of Moses. Heber himself had migrated northwards from the ancestral lands of the Kenites in the southern Judean desert (1:16; 4:11). This was probably because “his house” (?) wanted to pursue a policy of alliance with Jabin (4:17). Whatever the reason for the migration, it seems likely that to Jael the alliance was treachery against their Israelite kin. She was a woman of faith.

No doubt the knowledge of the LORD (cp. Exodus 18:9-11) had been faithfully passed down in her family through the years.

The day in which Jael did her deed was one of spiritual failure in Israel (Judges 4:1). For want of a man to “judge” and lead Israel (as events would show), God raised up a woman, Deborah, as His prophetess. She both prophesied and judged Israel from her house (4:4-5; cp. 2 Kings 22:14), but it was inappropriate for her to act as war-leader like other judges.

*Barak
prevaricated
instead of acting
in simple faith*

*The day in
which Jael did
her deed was one
of spiritual failure
in Israel*

And so, whilst she was the prophetess through whom the LORD commanded Israel to fight Sisera (Jabin’s commander-in-chief), she had to direct Barak to lead the Israelite forces. But Barak prevaricated instead of acting in simple faith upon the LORD’s word. Deborah accompanied him as he demanded, but prophesied that the honour that would have

been his from the campaign would accrue to a woman (4:8-9).

The battle was short because the LORD fought for Israel, seemingly using a cloudburst to swell the river Kishon and sweep away or disable the

*"If we believe
not, yet he
abideth faithful:
he cannot deny
himself"*

chariots of Sisera's army (4:15-17; 5:21). Sisera himself fled from the battlefield and made for the tent of Jael, perhaps thinking enemy troops less likely to look there and counting on the house of Heber's alliance with king Jabin.

Jael's welcome seemed to confirm Sisera's confidence (4:17f). On entering she concealed him under a rug. When he asked for water, she cunningly gave him milk, or perhaps buttermilk (4:19; 5:25). The exhausted Sisera was soon fast asleep. It was then that, with tent peg and mallet, Jael killed him (4:21; 5:26). So Deborah's prophecy was fulfilled.

Jael's act seems like treachery. But, as said, she probably felt that faithfulness to their kin in Israel negated any undertaking given to Jabin. Perhaps we can say that she was "as wise as a serpent" in her treatment of Sisera (but her example is not for us to follow – Matthew 10:16).

Shortly afterwards Barak arrived on the scene in pursuit of Sisera – just too late from his point of view. Jael met him. Through her act God had deprived him of what would have been his crowning glory – the slaying of the enemy commander. Presumably without the death of Sisera Israel would never have been safe from Jabin. So the LORD used Jael to liberate His people from Jabin's oppression (4:22-24). And so she, not Barak, received the blessing at the head of this article.

*If our faith
fails, God has
someone else in
reserve*

Lessons

- Despite Barak's lack of faith, God did preserve Israel. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).
- If *our* faith fails, God has someone else in reserve. But we shall "suffer loss" (1 Corinthians 3:15).
- Perhaps women have more faith than men. Women were last at the cross and first at the tomb.
- The Lord uses women to achieve great things, and honours them for it; and women will, reluctantly and in a suitable manner, have to lead if men fail. But it will be to the shame of the men.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit

I. The Bible's teaching

Stephen Thomson

This article complements Donald' Hill's article on "The Spirit's day" in the October issue, and clearly and forcefully brings out the great fact of the Spirit's indwelling. It is based on a "Truth for Today" talk on Premier Radio. (See www.truthfortoday.org).

One of the most important of the parting promises of the Lord Jesus to His disciples was,

"I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17, KJV).

Notice the two tenses at the end: "For he dwelleth [present tense] with you and shall be [future tense] in you." The Lord Jesus was telling His disciples about something that would happen, never before known in this world – that the Holy Spirit would come to indwell them.

What does this mean?

Firstly we must be clear about the *Person* concerning whom the Lord spoke, the One who would indwell them. Many talk of the Holy Spirit as a power or influence, but the clear presentation of Scripture is that He is a person. It is vital that we understand this, that the Holy Spirit is much more than a power or influence. Indeed "Person" should be written with a capital "P". He is God – a Person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit, co-equal with God the Father and God the Son. We will only appreciate something of the Bible's teaching of the ministry, baptism and indwelling of the Spirit if we have a correct understanding of who He is.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is perhaps the greatest of all blessings that have come to us through the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never in the Old Testament pages do we read of the Holy Spirit indwelling men or women. It is true that the Holy Spirit came upon the Old-Testament saints to enable them to carry out some special service or work, but this was a temporary thing. The apostle John's comment in his Gospel was, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). The Holy Spirit never indwelt persons in the Old Testament times. But in John 17:5 we read of the Lord's glorification – then still in prospect because the cross was still before Him; but now actuality! So this is New-Testament, Christian blessing.

And the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a blessing reserved to a special group of privileged or "advanced" believers, or anything of that sort, but is the purpose

of God for every child of His in this dispensation, from the day of Pentecost until the day when the church is completed and raptured to glory.

I want to take up the subject of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in two ways. In this article, we will think about the teaching of the indwelling of the Spirit as Scripture presents it. Then, mainly in a second article, we will consider the practical effect this truth should have in our lives. In other words, we will firstly look at what the Bible teaches objectively and then subsequently at what this truth should mean to us subjectively.

The Bible's teaching – He indwells every believer

Where better to start than by listening to the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in John 14:16-17 quoted at the beginning of this article! He spoke these words as He was preparing His disciples for the time when He would be leaving them. How wonderful, indeed, that the Holy Spirit of God would be “in” the disciples, and by extension in us! At the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew we are introduced to the name “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23); and so it was: for thirty-three years or so God was in this world with men, in the Person of His Son! Now, as He is about to leave this world and go back to heaven by way of the cross, He introduces us to “another Comforter” who would not only be *with* us but also *in* us. To be indwelt by a divine Person – how wonderful indeed!

Turning to Acts 2:1-13, we read about the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the bereft disciples who had gathered in Jerusalem, the Lord having ascended to glory. The evidence of the Spirit’s power was witnessed by all the great crowds present in Jerusalem for that feast, and the church-period or -dispensation had begun. We live in that same period; and although some of the sign-wonders seen at the beginning are not seen now, the Spirit is the same. His power is not diminished in any way, and there are still souls being added to the church daily – such as should be saved (cp.vv.41, 47). Praise God! How wonderful it is to see in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles (or the Acts of the Holy Spirit, as it has been called) the effect of the Holy Spirit on disciples who only a few weeks before had been discouraged, fearful, and downcast. Peter had denied his Lord with oaths and curses when quizzed by a young girl; now he was preaching boldly to crowds (Acts 2:14-4:22). The boldness of Peter and John made the people marvel and take account of the fact that “they had been with Jesus” (4:13). What a change! I wonder if our neighbours, friends and workmates think the same of us. Have we this testimony, that we have been with Jesus? Quite a challenge!

The consequence, then, of the gospel of “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21) being preached to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16) was the Holy Spirit indwelling each believer. What a wonderful beginning for the company that would shortly be called “Christians”! (Acts 11:26)

In Acts we see the gospel *preached*, but in the epistle to the Romans we have the gospel *taught*. How necessary for all believers is the truth taught in the Roman epistle! Among its great truths we discover (5:5) that the Holy Spirit has been *given* to us, and in 8:9 we read that He, the Spirit of God, *dwells* in us. You will see as you read through Romans 8 that "Spirit" has a capital 'S'. It is the *Person* of the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (v.16).

"When do we receive the Holy Spirit?" "What do I have to do to get the Holy Spirit?" Whilst I believe the answers to these questions are clear, there has been confusion about them amongst believers. Some pray, and ask the Holy Spirit to come to them, so that they might receive Him. This is not intelligent as to the teaching of the Scriptures, nor is it necessary. In Ephesians 1:13-14 we get the clear answer:

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory".

The force of the original is, "having believed, ye were sealed" (William Kelly¹). I don't think the apostle Paul could have been much clearer. Note the sequence in these verses – (1) they heard the word of truth and trusted in Christ, and (2) as a consequence of believing they were sealed by the Holy Spirit.

In the *Scofield Study Bible*² there are three very nice thoughts in relation to the sealing of the Spirit. The sealing speaks of:

- A finished transaction;
- Ownership; and
- Security.

Let us briefly think about each of these in turn:

- *A finished transaction.* I'm not sure if the practice still exists anywhere today, but there was a time when, once a deal had been concluded, a wax seal was put on the agreement – leading to the phrase "signed and sealed". Once we have believed in Christ we belong to God and the deal is complete and cannot be undone. The indwelling of the Spirit is that "seal". Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing or nobody! (see Romans 8:35-39)
- *Ownership.* Where I live there are cattle and sheep in the fields, and even from a distance you can see the tags in the ears of the cattle and the coloured marks on the backs of the sheep. They belong to the farmer; they're his, with his mark

¹ W. Kelly, *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* (London, n.d.), p.iii.

² The *Scofield Study Bible* [formerly, *Scofield Reference Bible*] (New York, 1917 and frequently reprinted), note on Ephesians 1:13.

upon them; and he looks after them. As believers we belong to the Good Shepherd. We're His sheep; He knows us; and we know Him and He cares for us (John 10:14). The indwelling of the Spirit is His mark of ownership.

“They that have my Spirit,
these, saith He, are mine”.³

- *Security.* We seal our envelopes to ensure that the contents are not seen by others. We lock our doors at night to stop thieves entering our houses, but, as we know, seals and locks are easily broken. But the seal of the indwelling Holy Spirit can never be broken. He will “abide with you forever” (John 14:16). We also find in John 10, “...and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (v.28). Once we have believed in Christ we can sing,

“Now I belong to Jesus,
Jesus belongs to me.
Not for the years of time alone,
But for eternity!”⁴

What wonderful blessing, to be sealed with the Holy Spirit! But, more than this, He is also the “earnest” of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). “Earnest” means “first instalment” of our inheritance. That we have Him already guarantees that God will give us the heavenly inheritance. Only, in this case we could say that the “first instalment”, being God the Holy Spirit Himself, is even greater than the glory that His indwelling guarantees!

The Bible's teaching – He indwells the church

However we must not miss the further thought brought out in Ephesians, that we are a holy temple in the Lord – a habitation of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). Collectively, as believers we are “living stones”: we are built together and compose a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5) where God dwells by the Spirit. From the beginning of time, God’s desire was to be able to have an intimate relationship with mankind. In the Garden of Eden, God communed with Adam and Eve until sin came in and spoiled things (cp. Genesis 3:8). Their attempt to cover up their nakedness was futile, and God demonstrated that blood had to be shed if sin was to be covered (3:21). Later, God appointed for Himself a “dwelling place” amongst His earthly people, Israel, on the basis of shed blood – the blood of sacrifices that pointed forward to the death of the Lord Jesus (Exodus 40:34 with Leviticus 1–7; 26:11f). Now that Israel has been set aside for the time being because of their refusal of their Messiah, God’s dwelling place is not physically in Jerusalem but spiritually in the

³ Hugh Stowell 1799-1865.

⁴ Norman J. Clayton 1903-1992.

church. "The church" is the collective term for every blood-bought believer of this dispensation.

So not only does the Holy Spirit dwell in the heart of each believer during this dispensation, but He also dwells in the church. It is the Lord's desire that we meet together with fellow believers. We often remember the Lord's promise to be in the midst of the two's or three's who gather together in His name (Matthew 18:20); and what a blessed privilege to know the presence of the Lord as we gather! Where the Spirit of the Lord is – there is liberty! (2 Corinthians 3:17).

With privileges go responsibilities, whether we think of the Holy Spirit's indwelling of us personally or corporately, and we also have to be sure neither to "grieve" nor to "quench" Him (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). We shall return to some important points in relation to these important matters in a second article, God willing. But we must close with one of them.

Being filled with the Spirit

I trust I have clearly demonstrated the truth that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer and that this is in contrast to anything known to saints of the Old Testament. In Psalm 51:11 David, under the conviction of and repentance from his grave sin, prays, "Take not thy holy spirit from me". Christians need to mourn and repent of their sins, but no Christian need pray *this* prayer. Neither should we pray for the Holy Spirit to come to us. He indwells us, and it has been helpfully pointed out that we don't need to be concerned about getting more of the Spirit, but, rather, about the Spirit getting more of us! To be "filled with the Spirit," as we have it in Ephesians 5:18 is not to put more of the Spirit "in", but rather to "clear out" more of the things in our lives that hinder His work in us and with us. It is really the law of displacement; the Holy Spirit *is* in us and will fill us as we make room for Him in our lives.

What power we would have if we were filled with the Holy Spirit! Think of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and the way he spoke and acted as the stones rained down on him. We read that he was "full of the Holy Spirit," and this was why he was able to endure such a terrible death and to pray for the forgiveness of those who were killing him (Acts 7:55-60).

Where
the Spirit
of the
Lord is
– there is
liberty

Think of
Stephen,
the first
Christian
martyr,
he was
"full of
the Holy
Spirit"

The worth of the Lamb

Revelation 5:1-6

Donald Davison

We are thankful that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...” (2 Timothy 3:16, KJV), and therefore we do not value one Scripture more than another. But there are certain Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments which stand out, having their own peculiar loveliness and charm that appeal to all of our hearts. The Scripture we are now seeking to look at is one of these; with the Lord’s help we hope to be able to bring out some of this loveliness and charm.

In the two previous articles of this series, on chapter 4 of Revelation,¹ we have been introduced to the throne room of the universe, and to God, who sits and governs all as supreme from there. We have been impressed with the grandeur, greatness, and glory of His person, with the celestial inhabitants of such a place; and indeed with our own place (as symbolised by the elders) among them. We have been contemplating in some measure “the greatness and rights of God in creation.” We are now privileged in chapter 5 to look at the One who in virtue of His essential deity and by His sacrifice at Calvary, has won the right and title to share the throne of God and from there carry everything through in judgment and administration on His behalf. We are also privileged to see and hear every voice in heaven ascribing His worth as the “Lamb” who has accomplished redemption.

Chapter 5 is a direct continuation of chapter 4. The setting in heaven is the same, but the scene changes from one displaying the “rights of God in *creation*” (chapter 4) to one setting forth the “worth of the Lamb” in *redemption* (chapter 5). From this point forward in the book of Revelation all events concern the future, i.e., from 6:1 – 22:6. (After this we reach the short closing section (22:7-21) in which the Lord appeals to those of the present time who “keep the sayings of this book,” and makes the threefold promise of encouragement as to His “coming quickly” for His faithful servants of this Christian era.)

Verses 1-2. John sees “in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book [i.e., a scroll]”. The “right hand” is the place of authority, power, and administration. The book John sees is a very full one, for it is written on both sides of the scroll – inside as well as outside. And it is sealed with seven seals. An illustration of a sealed book written on both sides is found in Jeremiah 32:11, 14, where Jeremiah is instructed by the Lord to buy a field. The detailed evidence of the rights of ownership, purchase, and redemption were to be recorded on a scroll written on both sides. From this we may deduce that detailed evidence of the rights of

¹ *Scripture Truth*, vol.58, pp. 204ff & 234ff (October 2014 and January 2015).

ownership, purchase and redemption were recorded on the two sides of the scroll in Revelation. It has been described as containing the “title-deeds of the universe.” Each redeemed heart admits the supreme title of our Lord Jesus Christ to the ownership and government of the universe both *by reason of His essential Deity*, His creatorial power as the Originator of all things, and also *by purchase* – through an accomplished redemption. This full scroll is sealed with seven seals, because the execution of its contents awaits someone whose “right it is” (see Ezekiel 21:27).

What a sight John beholds, and what a mighty voice he hears, saying, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose [break] the seven seals thereof?” Who is this whose hands hold out this book? They are the hands of Almighty God! The mighty voice that he hears issuing this challenge is that of a “strong angel”.

Verses 3-4. The challenge issued in verse 2 fails at the first attempt! No one is found “in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth” – that is, in the three created spheres, celestial, terrestrial or infernal – who was “worthy to open and to read the book, [and] to look thereon.” As a result John “wept much”. It is remarkable that John is the only person ever recorded as weeping in heaven. However, to me a much greater marvel is that the eternal Son of God, the One who inhabits both heaven and eternity, should be found weeping upon earth as a man at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35).

Verse 5. But from so hopeless a scene, relief is at hand. One of the elders says to John, “Weep not.” This elder has the mind of heaven, and he is at hand to reveal One who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seven seals. The fact that “one of the elders” can point Him to the answer shows us that they – the elders who comprise the saints from both Old and New Testaments – are already in the good of what is about to be revealed.² This gives assurance to us as saints today, that from the moment of the rapture we shall surround the throne in heaven, before the commencement of the events and judgments described from chapter 6 onwards. It confirms the truth of Revelation 3:10 that we (the church) will be caught away from earth to heaven before the great-tribulation judgments of the final seven years of Daniel’s “seventy weeks” (cp. Daniel 9:26-27) begin.

Who can this person be who “is able to open the book”? Who is there in the universe that without let or hindrance can approach the throne of almighty God and take the book out of His hand? John, who in the Lord’s lifetime upon earth nestled his head in the bosom of Jesus (John 13:23), is now presented with that same One as “The Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

² “It should be borne in mind that in this book the apostle John is not presented in his full place as an apostle to the church, but rather as a prophet... He is not here viewed as having perfect communion with what was passing around him.” William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (London, 1861; new edn., 1869), p.111. [Ed.]

*As the Lion,
He is
majestic,
and invincible
in strength,
might,
and ability*

As the Lion, He is majestic, and invincible in strength, might, and ability to carry through for God everything that is going to take place at the opening of the seven seals in the chapters that follow. Judah means “praise” (Genesis 29:35), and Jacob, in blessing the tribes in Genesis 49, prophesies, “Judah thou art he whom thy brethren will praise” (v.8). In Revelation 5, which is full of praise and worship of all kinds offered to and concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, we find the long-awaited answer to Jacob’s prophecy in Genesis 49 – our Lord Himself. The same prophecy compares Judah to the lion (v.9), for the lion is also the symbol of royalty (see v.10), and Judah is the royal tribe from which the Lord was born (Hebrews 7:14). Probably the emblem of the lion was on Judah’s standard as they were the first tribe to move off from Sinai (Numbers 10:14). “Lion” and “Judah” do not seem to occur together elsewhere in the OT (though see Ezekiel 19:2ff); so we may say that “Lion of Judah” here signifies, “the One who is that Lion of Judah, that Shiloh, of whom Jacob prophesied.”

The Lord is further revealed in this verse as “the Root of David.” For the meaning of this we have to wait until Revelation 22:16, where the Lord speaks of Himself as “the root and the offspring of David.” As the “Root”, the Lord is divine; and in His essential deity He is both the origin and source of David and of the royalty connected with him. Whereas, as the “Offspring” we see Him in His manhood as the Son of David, thereby establishing His place in the genealogy as the rightful “Heir”, “King” and “Lord of all.” This is the deep mystery by which the Lord confounded the Pharisees who had come to tempt Him, asking them the question, “If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” (see Matthew 22:41-45). We know that He is both David’s Lord (*Adonai*, quoted from Psalm 110:1) – because He is David’s God – and David’s son.

We come in the next phrase to a huge reference to the work of Christ as the perfect sacrifice. This is in the

words, “hath prevailed.” He has overcome, conquered every enemy and opposing force by His death upon the cross and His rising again from among the dead. This is how He established His power and right to open the book and to loose the seven seals.

Verse 6. John proceeds now in the power of the Holy Spirit to give us an eyewitness account of who the Person is who is worthy to take the book out of the hand of the Lord God Almighty and to reveal its contents.

Who then is He? As John looks he sees that “in the midst of the throne... stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” What a contrast to “the Lion” that he must have been expecting to see from the elder’s description! Here is the fulfilment and final answer of God to all the Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments that bring before us in type and person the wonderful truth of the Lord as “the Lamb”. Especially do we recollect John the Baptist’s most memorable words, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John.1:29).

However we must notice a few differences between John the Baptist’s description of the Person and work of the Lord, and what the apostle John now sees.

Firstly, in the book of Revelation the word used by the Holy Spirit for “lamb” is a diminutive, meaning “a little Lamb.” How touching this is to our hearts, telling us of our Lord as the Lamb possessing the lovely features of meekness, lowliness, utmost humility, and willingness to be described as “little.” We would rightly say, in the words of the hymn,

“How great thy grace! no mind of man can grasp
the love told out in suffering on the tree.”³

Secondly, in John 1:29 it is said that the Baptist was “looking upon Jesus as he walked.” But here it says that the Lamb *stood* (or, “stands”), conveying the thought that He is able and ready to act and carry

*A wonder,
a miracle!
The victorious
Lamb
of God
“standing
as slain”*

³ Albert von der Kammer (1860-1951).

*A slain
Lamb
bearing
the marks
of His
sufferings;
yet
possessed
of all
attributes
of Deity!*



through all the things in the scroll for the glory of God. When John the Baptist spoke, the Lord was at the commencement of His public walk and pathway through this world, a pathway that ended at the cross. Now, in Revelation, He “stands”. The suffering of Calvary and the sin-bearing completed, He now “stands”, and is the living witness that all has been done for the glory of God and the blessing of the redeemed.

Thirdly, the marks of His humiliation and suffering are visible in heaven. He is “standing, as slain.” (Darby Trans.). A wonder, a miracle! Someone slain but standing? Yes the victorious Lamb of God, who was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1.Peter 1:20, KJV), is “standing as slain,” with His wounds still visible in His holy, resurrected body in heaven. As the hymn “Crown Him with many crowns” says,

“Crown Him the Lord of love;
behold His hands and side,
those wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.”⁴

His wounds will be the eternal reminder to all created beings throughout eternity of the cost and price paid in blood for their blessing. Does this make true the statement that the only body in heaven which bears the scars of suffering and death will be His? I suggest so.

The number seven speaks of divine perfection. The Lamb is seen as having “seven horns”, signifying fulness of strength and power, i.e., indeed *omnipotence*; whilst “seven eyes” signify *omniscience* – fulness of intelligence, knowing and seeing all. The “seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” denote the *omnipresence* of God throughout the vast range of the whole universe. The “Lion”, manifested as a slain Lamb and bearing the marks of His sufferings; yet possessed of all the powerful attributes of Deity! What a picture!

⁴ Gordon Bridges (1800-94), revised by Matthew Thring (1823-1903).

The attack on heaven [1]

Theo Balderston

If a fellow-Christian told you that your eternal future following the rapture would be on this earth, and then challenged you for the Biblical basis of your heavenly hope, how would you respond?

A new view of the Christian's eternal home is gaining ground. This maintains that whereas believers will "go to heaven" when they die, this will only be a temporary visit. At the resurrection the saints will all return and make this earth their permanent home, only this time with resurrection bodies.¹

Recently an internationally respected evangelical website posted a short article advocating this view. I shall designate its author, who has a chair at a prestigious seminary with an evangelical reputation, "our terrestrialist."

Two "red herrings"

Our terrestrialist is fond of arguments that have no bearing on the point at issue. Two of these will be mentioned here.

The first is that, according to surveys in the USA, a majority of nominal Christians who expect to "go to heaven" when they die do not believe in bodily resurrection. From this our terrestrialist tries to suggest that believers in the heavenly calling belittle the resurrection.

They certainly do not: see below. However it has to be conceded that the formulation, "we go to heaven when we die," could lead some who hear it into thinking that death will bring all that the Christian will ever enjoy, and that resurrection is redundant. But the formulation is a simplification of what Scripture teaches.

Both the rich man and Lazarus were in *Hades* after they died, though they had vastly different experiences there, and Lazarus's part is called "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22f). In Luke 23:43 the Lord calls the place of departed believers "paradise". Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:8 are unspecific. Hebrews 12:23 is clearer: "the spirits of just men made perfect" – meaning the Old-Testament saints awaiting their resurrection – are here clearly described as in heaven. Nonetheless, whilst in one sense they are "made perfect" (10:14), in another sense they are not yet; they have to wait for us to join them in resurrection (11:40). The "heaven" of the intermediate state is not quite the "heaven" of resurrection.

The future destiny of the dead is unalterably fixed at their death, but it is not finally realized until the two resurrections of life and judgment (John 5:29). Therefore the

¹ This view had its early adherents in the type of millenarianism supported by certain church fathers.

formulation, “We go to heaven when we die” should be used intelligently, carefully avoiding misleading listeners or readers (e.g. in gospel outreach) as to its meaning. In any case, we should not be looking for death, but for the Lord’s coming. “Resurrection, not death [is] the hope of the believer.”²

Our terrestrialist seems to have missed the main point of resurrection. This is that we, each individually, should reflect Christ in His glory. It is not so that we can enjoy the material delights of a renewed earth (as our terrestrialist imagines) but so that we will be, even bodily, to the glory of God’s beloved Son. The importance of this is registered in the NT’s triple witness to it (Romans 8:29f; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

So if what happens when the believer dies were properly understood, and if the purpose of resurrection were properly understood, no-one would believe that “going to heaven when you die” makes resurrection redundant.

A second “red herring” introduced by our terrestrialist³ is to brand Christians who believe in the heavenly calling as Gnostics. Gnostics were people who held that everything material is bad, but that some people have incorruptible and immaterial souls imprisoned in their material flesh. Salvation consists in the extrication of these pure souls from the flesh and from this world, to soar upwards for immaterial, bodiless, residence in various aeons and heavens. This doctrine implies that there is nothing bad about such souls that needs to be atoned for; all they need is extrication from their corrupt material prison, which they can disown as never having been “really” them or their responsibility.

From this it can be seen that Gnosticism is entirely opposed to the gospel. No real believer can be a Gnostic. And to claim that the hope of resurrection for heaven makes one a Gnostic is self-contradictory. To be a Gnostic one must deny bodily resurrection, because that which is bodily is necessarily bad!

The relevance of “Adam”

So much for the red herrings (though our terrestrialist has more of them!) What about his Scriptural arguments?

His first argument rests on the name “Adam”. It means “ground”, and Adam was made “of the dust of the *ground*” (Genesis 2:7, RV). That is to say, the name “Adam” relates to the *origin* of man. St Paul knew this too, when he wrote, “The first man is of the earth, earthy” (1 Corinthians 15:47). But the name acquired a further significance after the Fall, when God’s sentence on man included the words, “... till thou return unto the *ground*; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (3:19). From that point on, the name

² The title of an article, generally attributed to Henry Borlase, in *The Christian Witness*, vol.1 (Plymouth, 1834).

³ In the book that apparently underlies the online article.

“Adam” certainly indicated not only man’s origin, but also his destiny. But before the Fall, nothing is said about the relationship between the name “Adam” and man’s destiny. I personally have no quarrel with the terrestrialist’s further conjecture that if Adam had not fallen, he would have lived on earth for ever, other than to deny that this is implicit in his name. But unfallen Adam’s conjectural future has no relevance to us. We *are* fallen beings.

And 1 Corinthians 15:47 continues, “The second man is of heaven... And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (v.49). At the resurrection, our connection with “the ground” will be snapped, and our connection instead will be with “the heavenly”. The contrast is clearly drawn in the verse in between: “As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly; and as is the heavenly; such are they also which are heavenly.” From this we can conclude that even if the name “Adam” *had* prescribed his destiny (which the Scripture does not say) it certainly does not prescribe *our* destiny who “shall bear the image of the heavenly.”

Paul returns to the same point in his second Letter. “For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (v.1). The origin of our new, resurrection body is heaven, not earth. One cannot say the same thing in two letters and not mean it.

Paul calls Christ “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45), implying that after Him there are no further “Adams”. Of course there are in *nature* – billions of them by now – so Paul must mean that *before God* there are no further Adams because “the last Adam became a life-giving spirit”. That is to say: Christ became the “last Adam” in order (i) that He might be capable of dying and thus atoning for the sins of everyone from Adam on (and indeed that in Him, sinless yet “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” God might pass sentence on “sin in the flesh” as such – Romans 8:3); and (ii) that He might rise again bodily, the


*Resurrection,
not death
is the hope
of the believer.*



*The main point
of resurrection
is that we
should reflect
Christ
in His glory*



*In the
resurrection
of life
there are
no “Adams”*

*“That
where I am
there
you
may be also”*

second Man. In the resurrection of life there are no “Adams”.

All that this section is designed to do is disprove our terrestrialist’s contention that *the name “Adam”* defines our destiny. I now turn to showing positively that our eternal destiny is heavenly.

The Bible’s silence about heaven?

Our terrestrialist’s second proof that heaven will not be the saints’ everlasting home is the sparseness of descriptions of heaven in the Bible. One might have thought that this is because there is no point in trying to describe the indescribable, but to our terrestrialist the near-silence is designed to deflect our minds from the subject.

According to him, the only accounts of heaven in the NT are in Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21-23, 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, and 1 Thessalonians 4:14. As we have already seen the first three concern “the intermediate state”, and he probably, though falsely, imagines that the fourth does as well.⁴ This fuels his case that believers will only visit heaven during the interval between death and resurrection.

However, what heaven looks like is beside the point. The issue is whether Scripture *teaches* that our resurrection life will be lived there.

To answer this we had best look first at John’s Gospel. The Lord Jesus promised His disciples that He would “come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also” (14:3).

According to our terrestrialist “I will come again” here refers to death as conducting us into the intermediate state. His reasoning is obscure. Perhaps he is claiming that the word translated “mansions” in the KJV means “temporary resting places.” But it cannot mean that in verse 23 of the same chapter (the only other Biblical occurrence). John uses this word because of its connection to the verb “to abide.”

⁴ On this verse see my article in *Scripture Truth*, January 2012, pp. 24ff.

Or perhaps our terrestrialist thinks that because the original is in the present tense – “I come again” – it must have a “present continuous” meaning – “I keep coming again to you.” But why then not translate the “If I go” (also present tense) to mean, “If I keep going away”? This is obviously not the meaning. But the construction of the sentence (“if I go... I come again”) surely requires both present tenses to have the same force. So the present tenses are not “continuous”, but signify that because the first will be a definite occurrence, so will the second.

Granted, then, that the verse is indeed about “the Lord’s coming”, will this be to grant us dwelling-places on earth? Obviously not, because our Lord has *gone away* to prepare them! He “comes again” to bring us to His own permanent dwelling place with the Father. “I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go unto the Father” (16:28). The great inverse parabola that this verse describes is meaningless if the Son’s return to the Father is itself only temporary. The disciples’ relationship was henceforth no longer to be with Him as a Man on earth but *as ascended* (20:17). We go to Him that we might behold His glory. “Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (17:24). Notice that the “where I am” of this verse echoes that of 14:3.

The epistle to the Hebrews is equally conclusive as to the heavenly hope. In 2:10 the “captain of our salvation” is leading “many sons to glory”. Is this to earthly glory or heavenly? The latter, because the glory of v.10 has to be the same as the glory with which He is now invested (v.9).

In 3:1 we are said to be “partakers of a heavenly calling.” Our calling is certainly *from heaven* (1:2f; 12:25), but does it also lead us *to heaven*?

It does. Chapter 6:20 says that by His ascension Christ is “our *Forerunner*”. We will follow Him there in virtue of His shed blood, by which He already “appears before the face of God for us” (9:24). Already by faith we too have an entrance into the holiest (10:19). But this is not the end of the matter, for this epistle defines faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen”; and as what is exercised by the people who have *not* received the promises (11:1,13; cp. 10:19 with 35-39). So our present entrance into the holiest is *by faith*, i.e., only insofar as we are looking for the actual, bodily realisation of this entrance. The whole point of chapter 11 – the “faith” chapter – is that we too should run “the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of faith” (12:1-2, ESV). “Perfecter” here means that He was the first to finish its course, by rising and ascending to God’s right Hand. In respect of destination at least, we run His race after Him. It will lead us to where our Forerunner is, and is the goal of our faith, not some temporary detour, as our terrestrialist would have it.

*By His
ascension
Christ is
“our Forerunner”*

*we run His race
after Him*

*Our hope
is to be set
on things
outside
this creation*

Our terrestrialist overlooked all these passages and argued that Abraham’s city (11:10, 16) is only temporarily “heavenly”, pending its descent to earth.⁵ However 12:22ff describe a number of distinct things, each joined to the previous by an “and.” Thus “the innumerable company of angels” is not the same as “the church of the firstborn”, and so on. Therefore “mount Zion,” speaking of the earthly Jerusalem viewed from the perspective of its coming glory, is *not* the same as “the heavenly Jerusalem.”⁶ This disproves our terrestrialist’s assertion that they are the same.

Chapter 12:25-28 forms a conclusion to the argument of the entire epistle, and balances 1:1-3. *There* we were to listen to God speaking in a Son who made the worlds; *here* we are to listen to that same voice that soon will shake both earth and heaven. The writer represents this shaking as removing the things “made” (i.e., created) in order that things not shaken (i.e., outside the created order of the heavens and the earth) might remain. How this is to be reconciled with other Scriptures speaking of the survival of the created order into new creation is a question for another time; here, the point is that this conclusion reinforces the truth that *our* hope is to be set on things outside this creation.

So much for John’s Gospel and the epistle to the Hebrews. What about the rest of the New Testament? Its testimony to the heavenly calling will be considered in future articles, God willing.

⁵ Our terrestrialist’s habit of shunting inconvenient passages of Scripture into the intermediate state invests that state with more importance than Scripture truly gives it.

⁶ Many modern versions, though not ESV and NRSV, suppress the “and” that joins the two in the original

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F B Hole

What hast thou done for me?

A true hymn should be Scriptural in every line. This is how one well-known hymn was first published. Reading the references repays the effort!

I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed
that thou might'st ransomed be
and quickened from the dead.
I gave my life for thee;
What hast thou given for Me?

Galatians 2:20
1 Peter 1:19
Ephesians 1:7
Ephesians 2:1
Titus 2:14
John 21:15-17

My Father's home of light,
My rainbow-circled throne
I left, for earthly night,
for wanderings sad and lone.
I left it all for thee;
Hast thou left aught for me?

John 17:5
Revelation 4:3
Philippians 2:7
Matthew 8:20
2 Corinthians 8:9
Luke 18:29¹

I suffered much for thee,
more than thy tongue may tell
of bitterest agony
to rescue thee from hell.
I suffered much for thee;
what canst thou bear for me?

Isaiah 53:5
Matthew 26:39
Luke 22:44
Romans 5:9
1 Peter 2:21-24
Romans 8:17,18

Oh, let thy life be given,
thy years for Him be spent,
world-fetters all be riven,
and joy with suffering blent:
I gave Myself for thee;
– Give thou thyself to Me!

Romans 6:13
2 Corinthians 5:15
Philippians 3:8
1 Peter 4:13-16
Ephesians 5:2
Proverbs 23:26

F.R.Havergal, *The Ministry of Song* (London, 1869), pp. 105f
(selected verses).

¹ As emended by the New York edition of 1872 from the 10:29 in the British editions