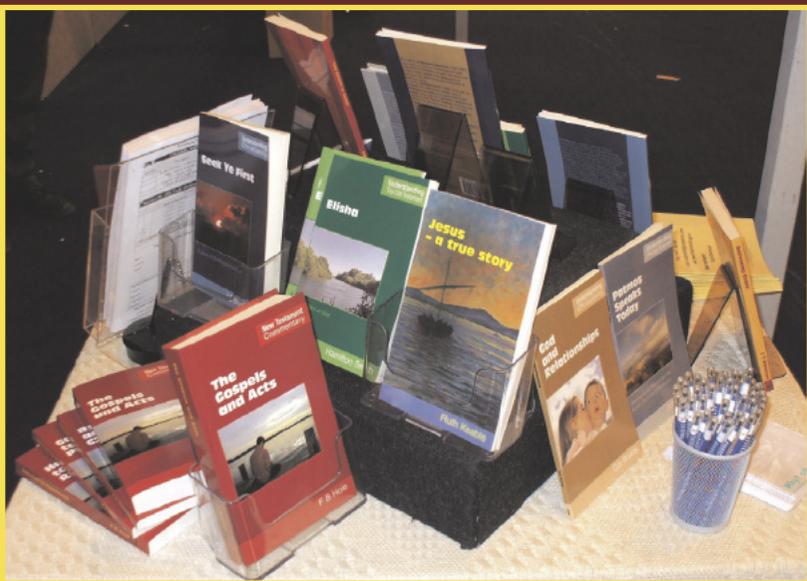


Centenary  
1909 – 2009

# Scripture Truth



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How do we regard the Bible?

The Father's love and the Father's bosom

Steadfastness

"I will come again"

January – March 2009

# SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

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

Annual Subscription 2009

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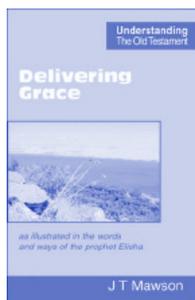
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**SCRIPTURE TRUTH** is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust

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# Why Scripture Truth exists

*Scripture Truth* first appeared in January 1909. If the original editors had been told of their magazine reaching the present issue, they would have been disappointed, I feel sure – disappointed that the Lord would not have come by 2009! They were “eagerly wait[ing] for the Saviour”, “like men who wait for their master” (Philippians 3:20; Luke 12:36 NKJV). But they were also keen evangelists, and would have been quick to remember that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise... but is longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish...” (2 Peter 3:9). This being so, I feel that their second thought would be a hope that a real exercise to nourish some of the Lord’s people would still be propelling the magazine, and not just a dreadful, dead, organisational momentum.

Why does *Scripture Truth* exist? Preparation for this issue involved me in some rewarding research in its back numbers. The first issue of the new magazine opened with a warm-hearted letter of greeting to the readers (typical of J.T.Mawson, one of the founder-editors), but unrevealing of the magazine’s aims. However the January issue in 1910 did begin with “a Programme”,

which is reprinted as the second article of this centenary issue. Its opening sentence expresses the twin principles underpinning the exercise of Mawson and his co-editor, H.D.R.Jameson: to minister the truth of the Scripture in the conviction of its full authority and verbal inspiration; and to do so according to the truth of the one body, livingly applied. They had commenced the magazine to serve the needs of Christians and their congregations who had been cut off by a more numerous body on the pretext of a disciplinary issue,<sup>1</sup> and the matter of not looking “upon any less a circle than Ephesians 4:4 contemplates – ‘the body of Christ’” – was very dear to them.

But their magazine also arose at a time when many believers were dismayed by the increasing attacks on the truth and authority of Scripture from within the ranks of professing Christianity. It was launched just before the commencement in California of the famous series of pamphlets with the generic title, *The Fundamentals. A Testimony to the Truth* (1910-1915). This was the series that gave rise to the noun “fundamentalism”, originally coined to deride those supposed ignoramuses who believed the Bible (its meaning only more

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<sup>1</sup> Personal information from J.S. Blackburn, based on his conversations with Mawson. Till 1908 Mawson had devoted himself to evangelism.

recently shifted to connote un-Christian militant and violent action motivated by religion). This background might explain the title, *Scripture Truth*. The two editors perhaps hoped it would help the magazine to reach out to a wider readership of believers dismayed by “modernism”. As their article below explains, however, the magazine was not mainly intended to meet hostile attacks on the Bible, but to feed the people of God from that inerrant, “living and abiding Word”, as it centres on His beloved and eternal Son, and works out in reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). I hope they would have been relieved to see an excerpt from this verse still standing at the head of every issue.

H.D.R. Jameson was called home to glory as early as May 1912 (see *Scripture Truth*, 1912, p.177). Mawson remained sole editor until his homecall in July 1943. Then F.B. Hole, who had published the magazine from its beginning, took over;<sup>2</sup> he had terminated his own magazine, *Edification*, at the end of 1939 due to wartime costs and paper shortages. Hole remained editor of *Scripture Truth* till May 1962. In his final issue he included a “Prospect” for

it, which is reprinted as the third article in this issue. The mood is perhaps more sombre; he takes as his text Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:18ff. He particularises three “fundamentals” for the magazine – “the gospel of God” (encouragements to evangelists were especially prominent under Mawson’s editorship); the teaching of “the kingdom of God”, especially in its present aspect as governing Christian behaviour; and “the whole counsel of God”, especially as taught in Ephesians (see 1:9), and particularly “the great mystery... concerning Christ and the church” (5:32). These remain fundamental to the magazine.

When Colin Curry became editor in 1984 he published his own detailed reflections on the kind of co-operation between editor, authors – and readers(!) – that would make the magazine “work”. He also explained his own motivation: “Like Peter, I would never start if Christ were not there. Talking about Scripture is totally worthless if Christ is not seen, both *in* the Scriptures, and always at hand to open our eyes to see Him there. I cannot imagine writers and readers with an interest in Scripture divorced from Christ. *He* makes it all worthwhile.” Like all that he wrote, this article,

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<sup>2</sup> Hole had collaborated with Mawson in evangelistic work in north America and Jamaica in the 1890s. See Hole’s remarks on his predecessor in the Sept. 1943 issue of *ST*, and Mawson’s interesting autobiographical piece, published posthumously by Hole in *ST*, 1960, pp.184ff.

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reprinted as the fourth in this issue, is worth a close look by all “stakeholders”!

For the fifth article I selected a robust and lively defence by F.B. Hole of the authority of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. Published in 1957, it too reflects its time in that it followed a newspaper controversy over “fundamentalism” – which leading churchmen regarded as an embarrassing eyesore in their attempt to win the good opinion of the men of the world.<sup>3</sup>

*This article is as timely today as fifty years ago.* The “fundamentalist” stance has been diluted by some evangelical scholarship, not in the sense of its rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture, but in the sense that, instead of fundamentally opposing, it seeks a shared basis with what previously it would have treated as “modernist” error – seeking to commend where possible, and, when opposing, to do so *on presuppositions that “modernism” would accept.* Of course “modernist” works are not informationally, and occasionally not even spiritually, valueless. But the basis of the “research programme” of academic “Biblical Studies”, ever since the eighteenth-century “enlightenment”, is that of treating the Bible “as if it was any ordinary book”. The research basis adopted affects the output. The “truths” of academic enterprise are statements that are capable of being

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defended in the scholarly research seminar, and, even if evangelical scholars defend things that such seminars would place “out of bounds” (e.g., the miraculous), the habits of that arena rub off on those commentators who participate in it. These scholars are often fine Christians and their commentaries often illuminating, but their method inevitably weakens the sense of the inerrancy and divine authority of the Book they study. This contributes to the weakness of Christian witness in our world.

J.S. Blackburn, who succeeded Hole as editor from 1962 to 1984, does not seem to have set down any statement of the rationale of the magazine. Instead, I selected material from his pen on an even more basic matter than the inerrancy of Scripture – the Biblical

<sup>3</sup> For some account of this controversy see J.I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (London, Inter-Varsity Press, 1958) pp. 1-21.

truth of the Trinity, constantly attacked, usually in subtle ways. Entitled “The Father’s love and the Father’s bosom”, it encapsulates a major theme of his ministry – the eternal love of the Father for the Son – the spring of all else in Christianity, that nothing must be allowed to contaminate.

*Steadfastness* is needed for the lively working out the truths of the Scripture. This is the subject of the seventh article in this issue, by F.A.Hughes, joint-founder and -editor of *Precious Things*. The believer, whose eye is upon Christ in glory, should mirror the character of God Himself, who is THE SAME; and work it out in *steadfast* continuation in “the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” and in steadfastness, immovableness and “abounding in the work of the Lord” (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Dr Gordon Hughes became joint-editor in 1993, and sole editor from 1998. I was dismayed to learn in 2006 of his decision to resign; the magazine can ill do without his godly, grace-filled, and prayerful editorship. Early in his term of responsibility he wrote the article that is last in this issue, “I will come again”. The ministry of *Scripture Truth* is still governed by the imminent expectation of the Lord’s coming – sooner now than when the magazine commenced! Christianity needs two lights to guide it into the harbour of God’s will. One of them is the fact of the life, death, resurrection and ascen-

sion of the Lord Jesus; the other is the hope of His coming at any time. Without both, it hits the rocks. Without the former, salvation is lost; without the latter, practical Christianity loses its direction.

*Scripture Truth* still stands where Mawson and Jameson placed it, on the ground of trying to bring readers the Christ-glorifying, positive nourishment of the Word of God, fully confident of its divine authority and inerrancy as “God-breathed”. It still agrees with them that,

“There are two things that ought to have a governing place in the hearts of all God’s people on earth, two things that should have this place because they are the direct outcome of the sufferings and death of Jesus, and not merely the outcome, but the very cause of those sufferings, for they form the purpose of God that lay behind that mystery of sorrow and woe. These things are, on the one hand, the gospel of the glory of Christ going out to every creature under heaven (2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:23), and on the other, the gathering together in one of the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).” (*Scripture Truth*, 1909, p.161).

This “gathering together” is to *Christ*, who is rejected in this world (including, if we take His Person and His claims seriously, much of the religious world); and it will “bear His reproach”

(cp. Hebrews 13:13). It will involve avoidance of false teachers and their errors. If the epistles are full of warnings to avoid them, and judgment had *already* begun at the house of God (cp. 1 Peter 4:17), such warnings cannot be less necessary in our day! But, notwithstanding, it involves love for all God's people, and should never have any society in view that is less than "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

*Scripture Truth* is Trinitarian, as already touched on, valuing above all things the true revelation of the Father in the Son by the Spirit; evangelical, for no-one has ever been saved, or ever will be, but by the precious blood of Christ alone; dispensational in that it recognises the varied regimes of testing under which God has placed man in his responsibility. It holds that we were not saved in order thereafter to use a "new life" to improve the "old man" and his culture; but that "we through the law died to the law that we might live to God"; that, "crucified with Christ", we yet live, but only as Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:17-20). It therefore aims to develop the life of faith, holiness, and fruitfulness that flows from the above great truths – the life of people pressing "towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14 ESV).

The thought of our union with Christ risen leads directly to Paul's ministry concerning Christ and the church,

already mentioned. And the ministry of this will also lead us to recognise the dearness of Israel to God, as those to whom belong the covenants and the promises (cp. Romans 9:4). Through all its ministry *Scripture Truth* must seek to deepen the adoration *now* of the Father and the Son, that will be our employment for ever and ever; and the clear gospel witness to the cross of Christ, the neglect of which *now* cannot be repaired in eternity.

I am extremely grateful for the labours of the contributors, without whom there would not be a magazine (!), knowing that they give themselves to this hard task "as to the Lord and not to men" (Ephesians 6:7). I have already gained great benefit, instruction, and encouragement from working on their articles. But are we up to the great task of feeding the lambs, feeding the sheep (John 21:15,17)? Sadly not! However, one Scripture verse has encouraged me greatly: "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" (John 6:9). They were only *barley* loaves, not wheaten, and *small* fish, but in the Lord's grace they fed five thousand, and the loaves served as a pointer to the Living Bread. May God be pleased to use this magazine in this way in the future as in the past, as we continue earnestly in prayer for this result. Maranatha!

**Theo Balderston**

# Scripture Truth – a programme

J.T.Mawson and H.D.R.Jameson

“Stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God” (1 Samuel 9:27 KJV).

We desire to keep two things prominently before our readers, namely, that “*all* scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16); and that the truths therein revealed are for the comfort and edification of “*all* the saints” (Ephesians 1:15). Indeed, the Bible is the book for all men: its words are the *sine qua non* for light and life and blessing; for it is written, “The entrance of Thy words giveth light”; and Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (Psalm 119:130; John 6:63). They alone are able to make men wise unto salvation, and apart from the entrance and reception of God’s Word men are blind and dead.

We are born again by the Word (1 Peter 1:23); it is that by which we grow (2:2); as it abides in us we are strong and overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:14); it “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16).

We know from the Lord’s own ministry that “Moses and *all* the prophets” contain “the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27); and, as these are the

things which we most ardently desire to know and communicate, we shall not depart from the one Book which contains them.

It may appear to some weak and futile, in the presence of the pretentious schemes and efforts with which the world is filled, to continue simply to minister the truth of Scripture; the more so because the Bible has come to be despised and set at naught, as was the One of whom it testifies when He was on earth. But in reality the Word of God is both quick and powerful, and we know that its truth alone can set men free from every hurtful yoke (cp. Hebrews 4:12; John 8:32). The very fact, therefore, that men are turning away from the truth should be a powerful incentive to the servants of the Lord to be steadfast and unmoveable in it.

All the truth has been revealed, and gifts for the ministry of it have been given by the victorious and glorified Christ “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4: 12 -13).

We cannot look upon any less a circle than these verses contemplate – “the body of Christ”. What a wonderful link binds us to every member of it! We are united by one Spirit to one glorious Head in heaven, and the life and nature of the Head is in every member of His body.

We do not hereby make light of the confusion and divisions which seem to give the lie to this blessed truth, for we have no more love for latitudinarianism than we have for sectarian bigotry; but we believe that all that God has wrought abides, and that the work of the Lord continues. His purposes will be fulfilled in spite of all opposition, and the church will ere long be presented to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but ... holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" and the truths therein revealed are for the comfort and edification of "all the saints"*

For this blessed consummation we wait, and with it in view would desire with all who love the Lord to be “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

*from Scripture Truth, 1910, p.1.*

## Scripture Truth – a prospect

When the original editor of *Scripture Truth* – J.T.Mawson – was called to the presence of his Lord in July 1943, he who had been from the outset the publisher of the magazine assumed the duties of editor. The infirmities of old age have now brought his activities in both directions to a full stop.

Under these circumstances there is one word he would like to leave with his fellow-servants. It is this – Do not be ashamed of frequently repeating the

great fundamentals of our holy faith. We do well to remember the words of the apostle Paul to the Philippians, “to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1).

As illustrating what we have in mind, take the farewell address of the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus, recorded in Acts 20. He summarizes his ministry under three headings.

**F.B.Hole**

1. He fully preached the Gospel of God, which he expounds for us in the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.
2. Amongst the converts he preached the kingdom of God. Not so much the prophetic aspect of the Kingdom, as reminding them that they had been brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). This meant that now the whole activities of their lives were to be lived under His direction, and His word govern all. Hence the many practical instructions that fill the closing chapters of nearly all the epistles.
3. He had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. It was that which aroused the determined opposition of the Jews, for it set aside, for the time being, the special place of national privi-

lege which they enjoyed. If Ephesians 2 be read, it will be seen that every true convert is of Divine workmanship as a new creation in Christ Jesus; and as regards the church, it is composed of an election called out from Jewish circles, and an even larger election from Gentile circles, and both brought into one New Man in Christ. In that verse [v.15] the word "make" is really a translation of the same word "create" which occurs in verse 10. This new-creation work lifts the converted Jew equally with the converted Gentile out of all the old associations.

Our closing prayer would be that there may be a clear and repeated testimony to the above great fundamentals until the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**from Scripture Truth, inside back cover, May-June 1962**

## Scripture Truth: observations from a new editor

... As the person newly entering into [the responsibility of editing *Scripture Truth*], I feel it appropriate at this juncture to make some remarks which would be less suitable during the magazine's normal running...

First, it is entirely right to give as full recognition as we can to the retiring

editor's [i.e. J.S.Blackburn's] substantial services to the Lord and to his readers, over many years, and in a widespread way. These have carried the stamp of unsparing devotion, with full and faithful application to the task in hand...

Since 1978 *Scripture Truth* has incorporated *Words of Help*, which until then

**Colin Curry**

was published separately. Editors of that magazine were Ernest Pettman and, at the time of amalgamation, Edmund Chamberlain. Though I cannot speak first-hand about these brothers, many are able to recall their worth and sterling work for the Lord.

Next, what does a new editor feel about the task he seeks to fulfil? This is a time, surely, for seeking the confidence and enlisting the support of others; a time for laying bare some of his inward thoughts.

A new editor, then, is conscious of *dependence* in many directions. First and foremost on the *Lord*, into whose service in these areas he is entering; also upon the Holy Spirit whose guidance and leading in such a service is essential. We must never lose sight of these basic enablements for right fulfilment of such undertakings. But other things are also necessary. *Co-operation* from all who are involved is important, and I make a strong plea for this. As I see it, producing a magazine, right through to the stage where readers are actually reading, is *one whole co-operative effort*. Editors, writers, readers, all have their part in this. It is pointless to produce a magazine without *readers* in prospect, preferably avid readers always looking for more. Also, *authors* of suitable material are essential. Then, editing is not a very simple matter in itself. Judgments are needed about suitability and balance; very detailed care is needed over the process of passing from

the written stage to the printed page. I should like to think that we are all prayerfully in this *together* (with some zeal) – readers, writers, and editors.

I now address some words to readers and potential writers in turn, and then (thinking aloud) to myself as a starter in this editing commitment. While I must be clear and direct, I feel strongly the need to speak in love, and to clothe my words (particularly to others) with grace.

### A word to readers

*Scripture Truth* should stay close to the Word of God, and the ideal approach to it (in an editor's mind) would not be greatly different from a proper approach to the Word of God. The latter is the sole and basic authority, of course – and everything should be checked by *that* – but how does Scripture picture a good approach to itself? What is the Scriptural norm for *readers*? “As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word” (1 Peter 2:2 KJV) tells us that our desire should be a total and urgent desire, such as a new-born babe has for milk. Such an appetite should not flag as spiritual growth takes place. Would that the content of *Scripture Truth* might be so close to Scripture that these desires may be common amongst its readers too! It falls to writers and editors to make their material close to Scripture, and to take the utmost care about its attractiveness and reasonable ease of reading; but they also have some entitlement to expect

readers to *try* to imbibe what is said. A new-born babe does not need persuasion to *try* to feed, and as the process gets going it becomes a joy and a satisfaction, even though some effort is involved. Contrast this with the picture drawn by the Lord in Matthew 11:16ff of the attitude of children, sitting in the marketplace, grumpy and never satisfied – the *childish*, rather than the babe’s attitude (to Himself, basically, and to spiritual things). This is the attitude that looks for spoon-feeding beyond its age, and is rarely happy with what is administered. We delude ourselves if we imagine we are not open to such moods; and an editor is by no means immune from things he points out as unsuitable in Christian readers. Let us be as those who have a taste and zeal for the Word of God, and grow thereby, especially in the awareness of the preciousness of the Lord Jesus.

### A word to writers

What shall I say to *writers*? I have been in that bracket for some time now, and hope to continue, but I would not advise solely on the basis of my own experience. But I have to say that I know well the labours and the time involved, the energy and the persistence required, the carefulness of expression continually needed. But I also know well the rewarding nature of the task, not mainly in the approval (or otherwise) it meets, but in the degree in which the Lord helps, and is pleased by what is done. Let me say too that I had never quite expected, before I began

writing, the value to my own soul of doing such a thing. To present some Scriptural matter with readers in mind calls for help from the Lord beyond the point of really grasping it for oneself... This really consolidates that spiritual matter within one’s very being, and draws one closer to the Lord...

These things are said to encourage writers. I feel there are more [such] persons about than have yet come to light. I hope earnestly that all current writers will continue. I pray that others will feel the urge, perhaps even the responsibility, to do it. The Lord’s interests will thus be served. I cannot say that I will look entirely uncritically at what will be offered for publication, but I wish (and will endeavour) to be gracious and supportive in the reception of what you offer. No one, I imagine, will take the attitude (common in the days of Malachi) that “anything will do” for the Lord. We shall have to be careful about content, about standards and quality, about grammar, and general presentation... I assume everybody knows this. It is not said to deter anybody. The Lord’s honour requires carefulness about the way we do things.

### A word to editors

Finally, words for *editors*. Words for myself, exposing a little of my feelings in approaching this work. Put simply, an editor must attend to the whole, and attend to the details. I have said enough already by the way about close attention to details. But, what about the

whole of what comes into print? Each issue must have some rounded character on its own. A whole series of issues, a volume, must have diversity, but also some real unity. It must match up to what it is supposed to be, that is, *Scripture Truth*. Still more must a whole sequence of volumes fairly represent the whole of Scripture. My part in this will be limited in time, short or a little beyond that. The Lord may come, *is* coming soon; and no believer will regret that termination of all his earthly services. But I must admit that to think of the breadth of content of Scripture, in all its quality and excellence, and to think of reflecting this (piecemeal and as a whole) in our pages, daunts me somewhat. Any sense of competence for this, of attainment already reached, vanishes. Like Paul we must ask “Who is sufficient for these things?” Along with him, and still more so, we must know ourselves to be “less than the least”. But I take heart from the same Source as Paul knew. There *is* a sufficiency. “Our sufficiency is of God”; “*My* grace is sufficient for *thee*” – a wonderful person-to-person assurance from the Lord Jesus Himself (see 2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5; 12:9). I find it so anyway. I trust no reader will get the impression that these are pious statements, said for the moment. The Lord knows that what I have said is genuine. I very much need your prayers that I may be kept in the frame of heart and of mind which has the lowest of

*Does anyone wonder  
if I am daunted?  
But I am entranced  
by it too.  
We can go ahead  
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thoughts of myself but the highest of Himself.

#### The tasks of the magazine

Coming back for a moment to Scripture, and the absolute wealth and variety of its contents, we shall have to guard against one-sidedness, and bias, in what finds its way into *Scripture Truth*. To take only one example: it would be totally wrong to leave out all reference to the state of things in the professing Church, the distress we should share, the humiliation, and the repentance that becomes us, in facing our part in the decline and decadence which we see around us so much more readily than we see it in ourselves. But there is a view above these things, to Christ and all that stands glorious and untouchable, upon *Him*.... But we must visit other areas too, though (staying in Scripture) Christ will always be the key and the great helper to our understanding. We must see ourselves

as very much on earth, walking in love, walking in truth, walking worthily, walking circumspectly, following in His steps, showing His life and character. We shall desperately need instruction in all this. There is prophetic truth, gospel truth, church truth. Teaching, exposure of ourselves, correction, training in righteousness, all is there in Scripture. Its sharp edge needs to be felt by ourselves; it must be taken, and used, and wielded as a sword. Does anyone wonder if I am daunted? I have not managed to be fair to it even in my topics mentioned above. There is so much more! But I am *entranced* by it too, rather as the writer of Psalm 119 was. We can go ahead in dependence on the Lord.

### Looking forward

While I have spoken about it openly, I hope it will not be felt that I have made a mountain of my part ahead, nor invited a spotlight to fall on me. At the

end, the only proper summary, if it can be said truthfully, is “We have done what was our duty to do”, and no merit accrues from it.

Like Peter, walking on the water, I make a start. It *is* venture, only made because circumstances indicate that He calls me to it. Like Peter, I would never start if Christ were not *there*. Talking about Scripture is totally worthless if Christ is not seen, both *in* the Scriptures, and always at hand to open our eyes to see Him there. I cannot imagine writers and readers with an interest in Scripture divorced from Christ. *He* makes it all worthwhile. I cannot pretend nor expect that I will do it all faultlessly. Like Peter, too, I may flag and flounder, losing sight of Him: this is more than possible. But still He will be *there*. His strong arm will undertake for me; just as He can cope with *any* situation.

*from Scripture Truth, 1984, p.129*

## How do we regard the Bible?

**F.B.Hole**

*This article, in the writer’s characteristically incisive style, goes to the heart of the principles of Scripture Truth. Its freshness and force are remarkable, unlike the dated, early-twentieth-century pamphlet he criticizes.*

### Battle for the Bible

In the conflict between the truth of God and the lie of the devil, between faith and unbelief, the attitude which we adopt towards the Holy Scriptures is decisive – *decisive as regards ourselves*. The Book, and the God who inspired

it, are quite unmoved by our thoughts and words. If an airman, flying over the Himalayas, regards Everest’s mighty mass as an illusion, and steers straight into it, he will not move Everest an inch. He will only move himself and his machine in disastrous fashion; and

the way he regarded the mountain will prove quite decisive to him and to the result of his flight.

Ever since the Bible reached completion in the apostolic age it has been the object of attacks. For long it was removed from the common people and buried in monasteries and the like. Since the Reformation it has been widely circulated, but then began denials and criticism. The mode of attack has varied, but more recently, especially in religious circles, the fashionable thing has been to eulogize it as literature, as a repository of beautiful religious conceptions, and a story of religious progress, whilst impeaching its real veracity, and undermining its authority as the Word of God.

### Nice? or True?

Years ago we received a pamphlet, bearing the same title as this article, which summarized such teachings in small compass. It emanated from the “Social Problems Committee” of a certain “Church,” so went forth under the sanction of a religious organization. No reader of our magazine would find much fault with its opening words:

“We Christians love our Bible. As life goes on most of us come to love it more and more. We go to it in sorrow and find comfort. We go to it in perplexity and find light. We go to it when we are weary and find inspiration. It never fails us. It is out of our own experience that we call it, ‘The word of Life.’”

Here are some quite nice sentiments, which our author undertook to express on behalf of Christians generally. We love our Bible, he stated, because of certain benefits it gives – comfort, light and inspiration. He did not state that we love it because it is true. He did not believe it to be true, as we shall see. Such benefits are indeed good and desirable, if they are true, as proceeding from TRUTH. If not, they are but destructive opiates for the soul.

[There are many false cults whose devotees would claim them to provide “comfort, light and inspiration”.] .... We ask, why applaud *the Bible* and reject *them*?

To such a question we should give, as an immediate answer, because the Bible is *true*, and they are *false*. Our author, however, had no such logical reason for his choice, since for him the Bible also could not be said to be true. And so, having opened his pamphlet in this pleasing way, he proceeded to give what he called, “blunt answers to blunt questions.”

“Do we hold that every word in the Bible is true? No! we do not. Do we accept the views of the Bible on scientific questions? No, we do not. Do we approve all the moral sentiments expressed in the Bible? No! certainly not. Do we regard the Bible as infallible history? No. Do we agree with all the opinions of St. Paul? No! we do not.”

Our author was not alluding to the fact that here and there in Scripture we have words and sentiments of evil men, and even of Satan, recorded; and that obviously such words and sentiments are not to be accepted as of God. No. He just stated that he and his friends did not believe the Bible to be true and trustworthy, either as to its *words, its views, its moral sentiments, its histories, or its opinions*. And if so, there is left no respect at all in which it can be said to be true.

Thus he asserted, as though he spoke for Christians generally. But there are Christians in their tens of thousands who utterly repudiate such weak and illogical unbelief. Leaving that aside, however, let us address ourselves to the main question. Ought we, or ought we not, to accept the Bible in its words, its views, its moral sentiments, its histories, its opinions, and we would add, its *assumptions*, as true? Let us allow the Bible to propound to us concerning itself the very question that the Living Word addressed to His critics, “Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?” (John 8: 46).

Take that tremendous Bible *assumption*, “Thus saith the LORD”, repeated over and over again. Now, did the LORD “say”, or did He not “say”? If *He did* “say”, then, to treat anything He said after the fashion of our author is undiluted blasphemy; and if *He did not* “say”, then to talk about anyone deriv-

ing comfort or inspiration from such deceitful utterances is to advocate a very silly form of sentimental, not to say immoral, religion. Nor would it improve the case by urging that the men who prefaced their writings with, “Thus saith the LORD,” or its variant forms, were good men, who genuinely thought they had a divine commission; for it is not the “good men” but their *bad writings*, that we are to derive comfort from!

Now, what underlies the flagrant unbelief expressed in this pamphlet? The steady refusal to see anything in the Bible beyond purely human literature; the acknowledgment of nothing in the nature of a revelation from God, but only of the evolution of religious ideas in the minds of successive generations of men. Here are the words:

“What then is the Bible to us? It is simply the story of how – through long centuries – men gradually worked their way from primitive religious ideas – and very primitive moral ideas, up to the loftiest height of spiritual perception which the race has attained.

Israel began with what we should call pagan ideas about God. They believed in many gods, and about their own special god they believed some very strange things. They held him capable of such feelings as jealousy and the desire for revenge. They believed he could be pleased by animal sacrifices. They thought He cared for one nation and could take

pleasure in seeing others massacred. And yet, slowly and surely, such thoughts were left behind. Slowly they learnt to fill out the idea of His righteousness with ever nobler content. They rose to a belief in His mercy, and then in His love ... And as this progress went on they discarded their earlier ideas. Many of the earlier conceptions in the Bible stand condemned by the later teaching of the Bible itself.”

Having read these statements, which purport to be instruction as to the true character and value of Old Testament Scripture, we have just our one question to ask as to them. ARE THEY TRUE?

### The Bible according to itself

*They are NOT true to the facts as stated by Scripture.* That can easily be verified. According to the Bible, Israel did not begin with pagan ideas of God. Israel himself and his immediate descendants had the knowledge of the true and only God. At a later stage in Egypt they evidently caught the infection of Egyptian idolatry to a considerable extent. From this they were again to some degree extricated by the wonders of Sinai and the Law then given. Their subsequent history was the exact opposite to the picture drawn by our author. Not a steady upward evolution of religious ideas, but a steady degradation to the depths of polytheism until the Babylonian captivity, only relieved by the faithful intervention of prophets sent by the LORD. And after the captivity, though they avoided idolatry, they

degraded religion into a mere matter of ceremonies and pharisaic observances that was sternly denounced by our Lord. This, we repeat, is simply beyond all contradiction the plain testimony of the Bible. The only increasing light to which it bears witness is the increasing clearness of prophetic testimony to the Coming One, which culminated in the COMING ONE Himself — the Lord Jesus.

Whence, then, did our author get all these assertions as to how Israel's ideas were evolved? Is there some other history of the chosen race extant, of such unimpeachable accuracy that he felt himself authorized entirely to rewrite their story? *If there were*, it would be honest of him to have denounced our Bible as untrue, and to have said, “We Christians despise our Bible”; rather than foist upon it statements that it contradicts. *There is, however, no such other history.* His statements represented the account of things fashionable in speculative circles where evolution is still the rage. He just moved with the times and advocated the latest evolutionary philosophy. He told us he loved the Bible, but he loved his philosophic notions more, and in their favour he handled “the word of God deceitfully“, and thus he “corrupt[ed] the word of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2; 2: 17).

To him, of course, it was not the Word of God, for in the pamphlet he spoke of it as “writing the world has produced.”

## Jesus – just our best dream?

He was pleased, however, to approve of “Jesus.” Here are his words:

“The summit of all this progress is reached when we come to the person and teaching of Jesus. It is to this that all the earlier parts lead up. In Jesus we have the perfect revelation at last. He is all the best we ever dreamed that God might be. He is the final and complete picture of what God is. His teaching is the final word about the will of God for man. He satisfies perfectly man’s craving for knowledge about God. And, therefore, the book that tells us about Him must necessarily be mankind’s most sacred possession.”

A number of these statements are true, and yet the whole passage exemplifies how truth may be used to decorate falsehood. The main idea is that “Jesus” is the summit of human progress. The race had been striving upwards, and its dreams of goodness were consequently in advance of anything yet attained, when, lo! as the fruit of this evolution there appeared “Jesus” and fulfilled our dreams.

Now for our question – *Is this a FACT?* Not if the Gospels be true. They show us that, instead of the Lord Jesus appearing as the summit of human progress, fulfilling human dreams of goodness (in which case He would have been rapturously acclaimed by all the leaders of this progress), it was precisely “the princes of this world” who “cruci-

fied the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). Isaiah’s prediction, “when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (53:2), was fulfilled.

Had our author access to some other document more reliable than the Gospels that enabled him to recast the story? He had not. There is no other authentic history. Either he was unable to read the sober objective facts of the Gospels without importing into them ideas from his own subjective consciousness, or he so questioned their veracity that he felt at liberty thus fundamentally to alter the story. He fashioned a “Jesus” after his own ideas, and not once in his pamphlet did he speak of Him as his LORD.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect and final revelation of God, because He is God. He is not the fairest and most perfect expression of the desires and genius of Adam’s race. He is the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, the Head of a new race (see 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49).

This quotation from an epistle would not count for much with our author, of course. In his paper he proceeded to explain that the Old Testament, though hardly needed by us, has at least *some* value, as an interesting story of the preparation for Christ. So too, the Epistles “are of value because they fill out our knowledge of Christ;” but he did not regard them as authoritative. The apostle John declared otherwise.

Writing of the false spirits in the world – “the spirit of antichrist” – he said, “We [i.e. the inspired apostles] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4: 6). Which spirit pervaded this pamphlet? Its author considered the apostolic epistles as open to question in many things, and the verses just quoted would be to him just John’s opinions, which we need not follow. But, judging by that sentence of the Word of God through John, he was deluded by “the spirit of error.”

### Which tenth?

Now what is the upshot of this way of regarding the Bible? A closing quotation shall tell us:

“From all this it must be plain that the Bible which Christians love so much, and which proves so invaluable for life, is not the whole Bible. It is the greatest thoughts of the Bible which feed our souls and refresh our spirits. Possibly the amount of Scripture which is thus living, and which actually operates in the lives of some Christians, might turn out to be little more than a tenth of the whole . . . Probably every reader makes his own Bible. The parts that do not grip him he passes by.”

A few more lines followed, containing a pleasing sentiment or two about the Bible, and the pamphlet thus closed as

it opened; bestowing its blessing upon the venerable Book!

... [However,] no assurance is given as to which tenth is of use! We are left at liberty to make our own choice. So “we Christians”, who “love our Bibles” are left each loving a different “Bible” – each loving what is condemned in part by the majority of other “Christians”! We are thus presented with the melancholy spectacle of “Christians”, every one of whom on a majority vote of other “Christians” would be condemned as foolishly credulous. If this were really the position, who would not be an out-and-out infidel?

We do not know whether the author included Luke 24 in his “Bible.” He professed admiration for the “Jesus” of the Gospels, though why he should it is hard to tell, since we owe the Gospels, as we do the Epistles, to apostles or men under their influence. If these are not to be relied upon in their Epistles, why trust them as to “Jesus” in the Gospels? Have we then anything left that is reliable as to Him?

It may be, however, that he *did* include Luke 24 in his “Bible”; and so he might yet have read that chapter, and noted what our Lord Jesus said when He was raised from the dead:

- “O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken.”
- “Beginning at Moses and ALL the prophets He expounded unto them in ALL the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

- *“ALL things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me” (Luke 24: 25, 27, 44).*

The issue between the Lord Jesus and the writer of this deceitful pamphlet is complete. Had it been openly and honestly infidel we should hardly have noticed it in our pages. Its danger lies not in its negations but in its smooth professions of admiration. The “Jesus” of the author’s imagination was eulogized in order the better to deny to the Bible its true character as inspired or “God-breathed” writings, bringing us A REVELATION FROM GOD. Did not the kiss of Judas prove of old a more effective device than the swords and staves of the multitude?

We welcome the opportunity at the start of another year, by reviewing this pamphlet of years ago, to make manifest once more our glad and humble acceptance of the whole Bible as the inspired Word of God. We consequently desire that it may have an ever

*The Book, and the God who inspired it, are quite unmoved by our thoughts and words. If an airman, flying over the Himalayas, regards Everest's mighty mass as an illusion, and steers straight into it, he will not move Everest an inch.*

increasing weight of authority in our own heart and in the hearts of all our readers. As a result of this may we be preserved not only from *taking anything from it*, but also from *adding to it* anything claiming to be a fresh “inspiration”, or “revelation”, from God, no matter from what quarter it may be preferred to us.

**from Scripture Truth, 1957, p.99**

## The Father’s Love and the Father’s Bosom

**J.S.Blackburn**

*The eternal relationship of love between the Father and the Son is the foundation of Christian revelation and of salvation. This article abridges the first and second articles in a series entitled “Shew us the Father” (still in print as a booklet from the publishers), with slight rephrasings to bring out the sense. Words in square brackets are editorial additions.*

## The love in itself

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:24-26 KJV).

In heaven above there is nothing higher than the love of the Father to the Son. Few who read the title of this paper will not, at least for a moment, entertain the thought, “Here is something far above me”. Yet before turning the page or putting down the paper altogether, let us recall the address by the same apostle John to the babes in the faith – especially to them! “I am writing to you, the little children in the faith, because ye have known the Father” (paraphrasing 1 John 2:13). The newest convert, the youngest saint, instinctively addresses God in prayer as “Father”...

And so, I repeat, in heaven above there is nothing higher than the love of the Father to the Son. This is manifested by the fact that, in the chapter from which the quotation at the head of the article is taken, the Lord Jesus looks for nothing further than to be restored to that

glorious home to which eternally belonged the Father's love for Him. In that eternity, where all that is truly abiding finds its home, the world – in all its striving and tumult, always seeking and never finding, with all its massive achievements and frightful evil and suffering – that world is but an episode. The Father's love for the Son existed before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). In all its course the world has not known the Father (v. 25); and the home of the Father and Son with all the saints in visible and perfect unity is forever beyond the world. All glory and honour on this earth will soon adorn the head of Jesus, but more to Him than crowns and kingdoms, than all the glory of this earth, is His Father's love.

## The love shared

But here is something wonderful for us – something wonderful to begin with as babes, better to go on with as young men and fathers in the faith, [and, best of all, to look forward to, for] every Christian can say “the best is yet to be”. The wonderful thing is that the Lord Jesus, the ever blessed Son, shares that love – the Father's love – with us who are His own. We cannot in this life fully grasp it. We could not have believed it, unless the Son Himself had said it. But He *did* say to the Father, “[in order] that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (v. 26). His prayer, and this provision, was (and is) not only that the Father's

love might be with them, but *in* them, known and enjoyed by them, to be their joy as it was His joy.

The Lord Jesus has done everything that was necessary to our entering into real possession of this priceless treasure, the Father's love. He has loved His own "to the end" (John 13:1). He has revealed the Father's Name (17:6, 26). He has given the indwelling Spirit (14:17; 15:26). In the prayer at the head of the article, He, so to speak, puts in a claim with His Father that we should enter into such real possession. If we receive and keep His words, have them in our hearts by meditation, and dwell in them, then the Father will indeed become the real object of our affections also.

... [But] surely (we might think) the Father's love must be something different in us than it was in the Son? ...The wording employed by the Lord Jesus in v.26 seems specifically designed to answer this question. It is "the love wherewith thou hast loved me". Our capacity to contain it is, of course, restricted. Jesus receives His Father's love in full measure, and responds to it in equal fulness. We are limited. Our measure is small, but the love is the same.

### The Father's love unfolded

It is a most fruitful meditation to trace this love in John's gospel. Indeed it is a central object of the Gospel to develop this transcendent theme. We start at 5:20, in which chapter we have the first great opening up of the revelation of the Father: "The Father loveth the Son" (cp.3:35). This statement is an eternal present, and in it the Son speaks out for the first time the blessedness of the love of the Father to the Son from all eternity.

To merely human thought, such love might be considered self-sufficient, with no need to reach outside. But such was that love that it had to seek the sons of men. This involved not only incarnation but death. And here is the second amazing statement (10:17): "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life". How can our finite thought cope with the fact that a love perfectly satisfied with its object, yet finds, in Calvary, a new occasion for its outflow? The circle is completed with 16:27 "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me". This is the thought amplified and confirmed in the prayer of chapter 17.

### The Father's bosom<sup>1</sup>

[But in what way does the Son Himself know and experience the Father's love?

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<sup>1</sup> The archaic "bosom" (which perhaps puts off the modern reader) is retained, as against the paraphrases of most modern translations, because it does not limit the metaphor in the original word (*kolpos*) to the present understanding of the translator.

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The answer is found in the phrase in John 1:18, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father". From that "bosom" the Son "declares" God.]

In introducing his thoughts on John 1:18, J. G. Bellett warns his readers [...], "I am sure I dread reasonings where affections should animate us, and withdrawing from the place of living power into anything like a region of notions or theories. But the mysteries of God are all of the highest practical value, in either strengthening for service, comforting under trial, or enlarging the soul's communion".<sup>2</sup> John himself, in his first Epistle, reminds us that "He that loveth not knoweth not God" (1 John 5:8).

A just working together of both mind and heart is thus the condition we should aim for and pray for, and this will be possible by the power of the indwelling Spirit. The themes we consider and the ground under our feet are holy; yet the words of the Only Begotten Son, regarding His dwelling in the bosom of the Father are, "Come and see" (cp. John 1:39).

... Christendom appears largely to ignore the immensity of step forward immediately apparent in John's opening page, when compared with the – in

themselves – tremendous steps by which God made Himself known in the Old Testament. This opening note, struck with such majestic sweetness in John 1:14,18, presents to us, not God's power, as in the name *El Shaddai*, (Almighty God), nor the foundation elements of God's character as in *Jehovah*, but His *affection*, seen first as embracing the everlasting object of His delight, the Only Begotten Son. Beloved, is your heart stirred by the unearthly sweetness of this opening note, "the Father's bosom"? Those who "come and see" where He dwells, and abide with Him, will surely have spiritual sensibilities awakened to hear it...

### The eternal place

"It was once asked me," says Bellett again, "had the Father no bosom till the Babe was born in Bethlehem? Indeed, fully sure I am, as that inquiry suggests, He had from all eternity. The bosom of the Father was an eternal habitation, enjoyed by the Son, in the ineffable delight of the Father – 'the hiding-place of love', as one has called it, of inexpressible love which is beyond glory; for glory can be revealed, this cannot."<sup>3</sup>

The quality of eternity that belongs to the Father's bosom is connected with the Person who "is" there. He is the Only Begotten Son.<sup>4</sup>... [The truth of

<sup>2</sup> *The Son of God, by the author of "The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ"* [i.e., J.G.Bellett] (London, Broom, 1880 edition, p.1).

<sup>3</sup> Bellett, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> As the writer often said in my hearing, the adjective, "only begotten", means unique;

this is contained in the two words of John 1:18, “which is”.] These two small words might with sufficient accuracy be translated “the One who is”... This phrase is the Name used in the Greek Bible in Exodus 3, when the Presence is so solemn that Moses is commanded to “put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”(v.5). God commissions Moses to be His messenger to Pharaoh, and Moses asks for God’s Name. “And God said unto Moses, I am “THE ONE WHO IS”: and he said, Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, THE ONE WHO IS has sent me unto you” (v.14, Septuagint).

The phrase THE ONE WHO IS thus appears as the Name under which... the eternal God declared Himself. Here is the divine mystery. [For the incorporation of this phrase in John 1:18 tells us that] the One who lay in the bosom of the Father was Himself the eternal God. The *Person* and the *Place* – the Only-Begotten Son and the bosom of the Father – are co-eternal.<sup>5</sup>

*The bosom of the Father was 'the hiding-place of inexpressible love. The Person and the Place – the Only-Begotten Son and the bosom of the Father – are co-eternal.*

#### The eternal intimacy

[Now we must consider what image is suggested by the word “bosom” itself. It indicates] the closest and tenderest of human relationships, as we may see from its occurrences in Scripture. “Carry them in thy bosom”, Moses imagines the Lord saying to him, “as a nursing father beareth the sucking child” (Numbers 11:12). Several times we have “the wife of thy bosom”. In this Gospel, John is described at the Supper as “leaning on Jesus’ bosom”, the posi-

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it does not signify a commencement of the relationship. A variant reading of John 1:18 is, “God only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father.”. But inspection of the use in Scripture of the adjective translated “only begotten” confirms its use in connection with a *loved child* (in the NT, aside from its use in relation to the Lord, Luke 7:12; 8:42; Hebrews 11:17). So, whichever text, “Son” is either explicit or implicit. [Ed.]

<sup>5</sup> It is helpful to note that the preposition for “in” in John 1:18, which in classical Greek meant “into”, had by New Testament times lost its necessary implication of motion, and often just meant “in”. See F.F.Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (London, 1950), p.65. [Ed.]

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tion fitting for the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). In all these quotations there is suggested the most intimate picture of the fellowship of love that human relations afford. Raised to the region of divine relations, it is thus the infinite capacity for the expression of a relationship of divine love, which is brought so movingly to our own hearts by this expression, the Father's bosom.

In the endeavour to seize the true import of John 1:18 it has been found helpful to enquire whether it is scriptural to speak of the Son "coming forth from the bosom of the Father".

J. N. Darby, in a letter, deals with a questioner in these words:

"I do not think 'coming forth from the bosom of the Father' scriptural ... because the expression is used to express a present apprehension of His love and favour, which depends on His being in that place. To come forth from it would be at best the thought of memory, and this ['Who is in the bosom of the Father' – Ed.] is evidently much stronger; it is the present being in, and in the enjoyment of, what the phrase expresses. He came forth from the Father and into the world, and left the world and went to the Father, but never, I think, is it said from His bosom. ... [Some], in expressing the love and joy He left for us, may have

used it in a certain sense harmlessly, namely, with right affections, though not quite accurately seizing the force of the expression in John 1:18. I may have done it myself, for aught I know. ... [T]he *force* of the expression is lost if we speak of coming *forth* from – namely, leaving it... Christ's being in the bosom of the Father is of so much the more importance, that He declares the Father's character as He thus knows Him."<sup>6</sup>

[Thus, the Son knows the Father's love as everlastingly "in the bosom of the Father". He declares the Father's name, and in this the Father's love (John 17:26). This is "the knowledge of the Father".] It is when this precious mystery has been assailed and denied, that the most delightful expression has been given to affirming it. From Bellett we have:<sup>7</sup>

"We must not, beloved, touch this precious mystery. We should fear to dim the light of that love in which our souls are invited to walk on the way to heaven. And (what is a deeper and tenderer thought, if I may be bold to utter it) we should fear to admit of any confession of faith (rather, indeed of unbelief) that would defraud the Divine bosom of its eternal, ineffable delights, and which would tell our God that He knew not a Father's joy in that bosom, as He opened it; and which

<sup>6</sup> *Letters of J.N.D* (London, Morrish, 3 vols. Second Edition, n.d.), vol.1 p.307.

<sup>7</sup> Bellett, pp.7,16

would tell our Lord that He knew not a Son's joy in that bosom as He lay there from all eternity...

Deprive Him of the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and ask

your soul if it has lost nothing in its apprehension and joy of this precious mystery, thus unfolded from everlasting to everlasting."

**from Scripture Truth, January, 1976,  
pp.177, 204**

## Steadfastness

**F.A. Hughes**

*"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). This article, echoing the conclusion to Mawson and Jameson's "Programme", aptly follows the truths defended in the previous two articles. There are some slight verbal changes to clarify the sense.*

It must be conceded by every honest mind that we are living in a day marked in every sphere by vacillation... That these features have intruded into the circle of religion is only too sadly evident. The authority of the Word of God, with its voice of divine certainty, is neglected, and often absolutely refused in favour of the vague and contradictory teachings of men. In such circumstances the believer is exhorted to "steadfastness", a word which signifies that not only are the *eyes* fixed in a definite direction, but that the foot is resting on a firm base.

Before considering further the principle of steadfastness in relation to the believer, it will be well for us to see this same feature expressed in Divine Persons themselves. It is an axiom of Christianity that the blessed God will never form any feature of the truth subjectively in the believer without first showing that truth in all its perfection in Christ Himself. In Daniel chapter 6

the faithfulness of God to His faithful servant Daniel is recorded in the latter's remarkable deliverance from the den of lions. The impression made upon Darius caused that Gentile monarch to exclaim, amongst other things, "The God of Daniel ... He is the living God, and *stedfast for ever*" (v.26 KJV).

The psalmist says of God "Thou art the SAME" (Psalm 102:27) – a Name which persists throughout Scripture. Paul, writing to Timothy in days marked by compromise and unfaithfulness, calls attention to the fact that God "abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). James refers to God as the One "with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). We read too of our blessed Lord that "He stedfastly set His face" (Luke 9:51) – resolutely, in one fixed direction. We who love Him know something of the unutterable sorrow and yet the mighty triumph which that pathway involved!

It is recorded of God's earthly people (Psalm 78:36-7) that "they lied to Him with their *tongues*, for *their heart was not right with Him*, neither were they steadfast in His covenant". The terrible-ness of that indictment is seen in the fact that whilst they did not continue in His covenant, the force of the verbs used indicates that they *did* continue in their deceit and outward flattery. We do not wonder that it is later said of that people they "could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance" (2 Corinthians 3:7). Let us ever remember that "these things ... are written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

How delightful it is, also to see in Psalm 78 the attitude of the "faithful" God to His unfaithful people. "He ... chose ... Mount Zion which He loved" – reminding us of the sovereignty of mercy which "endureth for ever". "He chose David" – a man *after His own heart* – who "fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:67-72; 1 Samuel 13:14).

In our own dispensation – the Holy Spirit's day – we read of Stephen who "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up *steadfastly* into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). This view of heaven was for the peculiar joy and encouragement of Stephen himself – as seeing the present position of exaltation and power of Him who had

"steadfastly" moved towards Calvary, and who "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Stephen's *personal* portion was this view of Jesus in the glory of God, the consummation of His faithful pathway in Manhood here. Stephen's testimony was, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (v.56). The One rejected by that guilty nation was now crowned in highest glory! The words used imply that this exaltation was permanent.

It is not difficult to discover the secret of Stephen's steadfastness. He was "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit". He was also "full of grace and power" (Acts 6: 5, 8, Darby Trans.). The unseen filling of "faith and of the Holy Spirit" was abundantly witnessed to in the "power" of his testimony and the "grace" of his intercession.

In Acts 2: 42 we read of believers who "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers". This was the result of the Spirit-empowered preaching of Peter and the other apostles who so definitely testified to the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would not this indicate the character of ministry which in our day might be effective in producing the feature of "steadfastness" in those that believe?

The word "steadfastly" in Acts 2 might be rendered as "giving diligent attention to every detail". An unbalanced

apprehension of the truth will lead to wavering and uncertainty; if stability is to be evidenced we need to be maintained in “simplicity” (singleness of heart) in regard to the truth as it is manifested in Christ.

Writing his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says, “He that standeth stedfast in his heart ... doeth well” (7:37). Whilst this verse has what is special in view, the principle involved would, without question, cover every detail of the Christian pathway. Steadfastness is not the result of fleshly effort; it springs from the affections being right with God. We have seen from Psalm 78 that steadfastness was absent from God’s earthly people because “their heart was *not* right with Him” (verse 37).

Nothing is more calculated to regulate our affections than the wonderful expression of God’s own love in the gospel – “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15: 3-4). As we read this most remarkable chapter we see the mighty results of Christ’s holy movements *into* and *out of* death – the triumph of the resurrection; the establishment of the kingdom and the ultimate glory of the “day of God”. But the end of the chapter reveals that we are ourselves to be an integral part of this wonderful matter — “thanks be to God which giveth us the victory

*Therefore,  
my beloved brethren,  
be ye stedfast,  
unmoveable,  
always abounding  
in the work  
of the Lord*

through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (vv.57-8).

Finally, we may refer to that most beautiful verse in Hebrews 3:14. “For we are made partakers [or, ‘companions’] of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence [assurance] *stedfast* unto the end” (verse 14). In chapter 1:9 we are shown our *privilege* as “companions” of God’s Anointed – while He is ever supreme and pre-eminent, anointed “with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows”. As *stedfast*, may we be increasingly marked in a *practical way* by those features of faithfulness and endurance so perfectly seen in Christ.

**from Scripture Truth, 1965, p.79**

# “I will come again.”

## I Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Gordon Hughes**

While the Christian rejoices in all the promises of the Lord Jesus to us, perhaps no promise is more precious than His words, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself” (John 14:3 KJV). The events surrounding that wonderful occasion are graphically set out by Paul in the above-noted section of his first letter to the infant church at Thessalonica.

“To meet the Lord in the air” (v.17). These few simple words have thrilled the hearts of Christians down through the ages. It is interesting that the verb “to meet” is the word used for an official welcoming party, going out to meet some dignitary and returning with him. (See Matthew 25:1, 6; Acts 28:15 for its usage. These are the only other places in the New Testament where this word is used.) No welcoming party will be more deserved than this!

What an answer to Calvary! It is striking that, while two different Greek words are translated “air” in the New Testament, the word used here is also that used in describing Satan – “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). That wonderful meeting will take place, as it were, in Satan’s realm, and he will be powerless to prevent it! In that day, there will be demonstrated a power greater than his,

greater than gravity, greater than nuclear power. Christ’s mighty power of resurrection will be seen and experienced in that day.

Three things will be heard at this time.

### **A shout**

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” (v.16). Isaiah had prophesied of the Lord, “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets” (Isaiah 42:2). Such, by and large, was the character of Jesus’ ministry. Only exceptionally would He raise His voice. He stood and cried in the last day, that great day of the feast, in Jerusalem (John 7:37). He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11: 43). Finally, He cried in mighty triumph from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). But now He shouts! The word “shout” is literally “a shout of command”. Every redeemed saint, alive or dead, cannot but answer to that mighty command! But perhaps that shout also indicates His great yearning. For how long has He waited for this occasion!

“He comes for oh! His yearning heart  
No more can bear delay.”

### **The voice of the archangel**

See v.16. That the archangel is heard suggests that He is commanding angelic hosts who are there to witness

this great occasion. Angels had looked on the Lord in this world (1 Timothy 3:16). They had ministered to Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11) and in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). How gladly they see Him now!

Amongst those angels will be those who “always behold the face of my Father” (Matthew 18:10). With what wonder will they see little children rise to meet their Saviour! Amongst those angels will be “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). With what delight will they see those saints of God, to whom they ministered in days of need, now at home with their Saviour!

### The trump of God

The first trumpet mentioned in Scripture was used to summon the

Israelites to Mount Sinai: “When the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount” (Exodus 19:13). From then on, the trumpet was used consistently to summon the Israelites together. So, on this great occasion, “the hosts of God shall be on the move, for the trumpets of God shall sound”.<sup>1</sup> What myriad hosts of the redeemed will rise in answer to the trumpet’s call on that great day!

What a hope! What a comfort! The call of each redeemed heart must surely be, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). As we look forward to that day, may we also take note of the challenge of our Lord: “Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord” (Luke 12:36).

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

*from Scripture Truth, 1994, October, p. 15*

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<sup>1</sup> F.B.Hole, Paul’s Epistles (Wooler, 2 vols.,n.d.), vol. 2, p.128.

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# The repose of faith

'But he was in the stern, asleep on a pillow' (Mark 4:38).

Sudden storm arising:  
mariners unmanned –  
little recognizing  
of the heavenly land  
where the Quiet Sleeper  
(wearied by earth's woes),  
though the boat ploughed deeper,  
found serene repose.

If they didn't wake Him,  
what had been their doom?  
would His God forsake Him  
ere His hour had come?  
No! Behold Him resting  
on His God above;  
*as a Man*, dependent  
on an Arm of love.

Happy brother pilgrim!  
step within the boat  
if the Master bid thee  
– safe with Him afloat!  
take no self-made comfort  
'gainst a coming storm;  
thou art heir with Jesus:  
go without alarm!

All the winds of Satan  
whistling o'er the world,  
all his power and malice,  
all his bad darts hurled  
dare not, cannot harm thee  
when with Christ abroad;  
"all things" only happen  
in the will of God.

If we'd just talked danger  
ere we left the pier,  
we'd have left it laden  
with our safety gear;  
or – with scant commitment –  
never sailed at all,  
fearing our equipment  
couldn't stand the squall.

But if we like Jesus,  
when He fell asleep,  
lean on Love to guard us  
on the rolling deep;  
then will raging billow  
silent preachers bear,  
pointing to the pillow  
of our Father's care.

*Adapted from A Voice to the Faithful, vol. 10, p. 29.*