

He that hearkeneth unto counsel
is wise. *Proverbs xii, 15.*

Eldership

(READING)

Freshness and Experience

(ADDRESS)

The Love of God

(ADDRESS)

The Counsel of the Lord that
shall stand. *Proverbs xix, 21.*

ELDERSHIP.

Notes of Reading in Adelaide, August, 1924.

Revelation—Chapters 4 and 5.

W.J.H.: I had not any idea of taking up the actual setting of these two chapters and their relation to the Book of Revelation. I thought it might be helpful to look at the subject of eldership, as seen in the features which marked elders in the two chapters, with a view to stimulating in all our hearts a desire to have a care for the interests of the Lord in the localities in which we are set. One is struck with the way the Scripture speaks of elders in the Acts. When the Apostle Paul moved from place to place and preached the Gospel, he waited for a time to see what effect the Word would have upon the souls of those who received it, and then he came back again afterwards and "chose elders in every assembly." Evidently the Apostle saw that each assembly would need the care and the oversight and the protection of those who were qualified as elders to care for the Lord's interests in that place. One would seek to stimulate in every heart a desire to have the Lord's interests before us. If we are going to care for the Lord's interests, the features of elders must be found amongst us. These two chapters illustrate what marks true eldership amongst the people of God.

J.S.: How would you look upon an elder at the present time?

W.J.H.: Not in an official capacity. The Apostle chose elders, and Timothy chose elders, and Titus chose elders, but we have not any

of those. We have not the official appointment of those who exercise oversight, but we need to be concerned that the features which are proper to elders might be found amongst us. While the sisters might feel they have not any direct place in eldership, I think these two chapters give them, and give us all, a proper estimate by which to measure any one of us. These two chapters should put into the hands of the sisters a reed that will measure those that take the oversight of the people of God.

J.S.: It is not confined to an individual, but to all?

W.J.H.: In the spirit of it, all should seek to be marked by these things. Evidently the Apostle Paul saw that each local gathering could not go on happily, and there would not be confidence in other parts, if there were not at least two who had the qualifications of eldership.

W.W.: Do you say that, apart from official appointment, there should be the desire in all our hearts to have the sympathies of elders, and, in that way, to care for one another?

W.J.H.: Quite so. And the Lord would foster that, and would increase it, where there is a state which is in accord with what marks elders here.

W.C.: What do you say would qualify an elder?

W.J.H.: The things in the 4th and 5th Revelation should be true of them in some little measure.

H.B.: Would you give us an outline?

W.J.H.: The first thing said of them is that they are on thrones ("seat" means "throne") around the throne of God, and they are sitting there. The first feature is that the elder sits upon a throne, around God's throne. That is

to say, his throne refers to his influence where he is, and it is in relation to the throne of God. He is set to maintain the rights of God. That is the first feature of an elder.

H.B.: Where would that start?

W.J.H.: In his own local meeting. They are "sitting." It is a position that is settled, that is not going to be moved. It is an immovable position. He will not move away from the rights of God.

H.B.: That would give stability.

W.J.H.: Yes, stability and confidence. There are those who, come what may, will sit around the throne of God, and they will not move. Don't you feel that a good deal of difficulty comes amongst the saints, because we often leave that throne, and sit around our own thrones; i.e., we think our rights, the place we ought to have, and the place our family circles ought to have, ought to be recognised. An elder sits around God's throne, and never moves away.

J.S.: So that it is always God's interest that is before him?

W.J.H.: Quite so. God's throne represents what is due to God, and His rights.

H.B.: An elder never dominates, but influences?

W.J.H.: Yes. His throne is around God's throne. It is not detached. If you or I set up a throne of our own in a local meeting, we are not elders, and we bring trouble.

H.B.: That is dominating, not influencing. If I take character from the throne with which I am in connection, there will be an influence. There will be the influence I have gathered from sitting.

W.J.H.: Yes, you sit there. However much trouble comes, an elder sits around God's throne.

H.W.: I was going to ask if this was a

feature which was seen very markedly in the person of Christ himself?

W.J.H.: I think every one of these features was true of Him. He is presented in the beginning of the Book of Revelation as the One Who had hair white as snow. He is the Elder of all elders, and what marks an elder in the house of God is first seen in its perfection in Him. He never moved from the rights of God.

G.H.: I suppose it works out individually according to the basis in which we have had the gain of the Kingdom of God as seen in Christ; to that extent we have become over-comers?

W.J.H.: Quite so. If we are really subject to the Lord ourselves, our influence will be for the maintenance of that kingdom. Our own rights, and position, and name, will not be that which we act in relation to, but our throne will be set in relation to God's throne. That is the first feature spoken of in connection with these twenty-four elders.

G.H.: What is a throne?

W.J.H.: It is the measure in which we rule or influence amongst the saints. An elder has a definite influence, but what is the influence you and I exert amongst the saints where we live? Is it such as has for its centre the throne of God, and we sit there?

H.W.: If that is found marking all the saints, we would all feel it.

W.J.H.: It would be conducive to the blessing of the saints, and confidence generally.

H.W.: So that one becomes marked out without any official appointment. He is recognised as a leader.

W.J.H.: Quite; so that the prayers of sisters who wait on the Lord would have this in view. One would like to encourage them on the line of praying.

C.S.S.: Would it work out something on the lines of "young men and fathers" in John's epistle. Our brother was speaking about the overcoming, and "the fathers know Him." That is the sense, is it not?

W.J.H.: I think it is a little different line there—that of family relations amongst the family of God. The father would undoubtedly be an elder.

G.H.: The throne Solomon made of ivory, with seven steps and a lion at the end of each step, would be suggestive as to how we need progress in accordance with the throne. The support of the throne is for the very youngest, and development takes place, so that, in that way, we become competent to act in accordance with the throne.

W.J.H.: David illustrates what we see here. There came into David's soul as a young man—probably as a child—a definite desire to have a care for what was due to God on earth. "We heard of it at Ephratah." He made a vow that he would not rest until there was a place for the Ark. That was the seed of elder-ship in his soul. He was set for what was due to God, not for what was due to himself. Men sit on their own thrones, and influence everything for themselves, but an elder does not do that.

H.B.: The way to reach a position of influence such as this is learnt along the lines of subjection and faithfulness; along the lines of the throne?

W.J.H.: Quite.

H.B.: There are certain difficulties which one meets. We there learn what God is, and how He can come in, before we learn to rule ourselves.

W.J.H.: I do not know what brethren here are experiencing, but one has come across a

good deal elsewhere of positive difficulty and sorrow amongst the saints in connection with the introduction of family rights into Christianity. One of the children of the saints desires to break bread, and brethren are not happy about it, and the brother or the sister is standing up for what is due to his family. The elder quietly sits unmoved on his throne, in relation to what is due to God. I feel it is important that we should take account of that. The first place for an elder to sit is on his throne, in relation to God's throne, not in relation to his family or to himself.

H.B.: I think that is helpful.

J.S.: That would bring in a natural tie, and that does not come in in Christianity.

W.J.H.: That would be moving in relation to the family, instead of in relation to God.

W.W.: These chapters are all future, but, in regard to applying it to the present, you would say that the elders need to be clothed now as they will be clothed in those days.

W.J.H.: That is the next thing. It is helpful to see what properly marks elders now, because it is going to come out in display. Where do you get a better idea of what the Church really is than when it comes out of Heaven, at the end of the Revelation, when it is seen as the Holy City, and the Bride of Christ. We get a better idea there of what should mark the saints now than anywhere in the Scriptures. The 4th and 5th chapters of Revelation are where we go, as an object lesson, to see what should mark elders now.

H.W.: Is this open to every saint?

W.J.H.: It is not a question of age when we speak of elders. David was an elder when he came out of his father's house to face Goliath. He had had experience with God, and he was an elder. His throne was set in relation to God.

H.W.: One thing amongst others which marks an elder is that he has had an experience with God. David certainly had, when he slew the lion and the bear. He had had his own secret exercises and battles. That should mark one who stands here for the interests of God.

W.J.H.: Quite so; and it goes back further than that. When he vowed that vow, he really sat upon a throne in relation to God's throne. He vowed that he would never move away, and never sleep, until what he vowed in relation to God was accomplished.

E.B.: There is just a danger of judging the spiritual by the natural. The younger ones might think it is necessary to reach a certain age, but there is no age in spirituality.

W.J.H.: Whether old or young, here is the standard. It applies to us all. Here is the perfect standard of eldership. The next feature as to elders is that they are seen in "white raiment."

J.S.: Our great danger is that we look on this as being a future thing, but we have to learn the character of things to-day.

W.J.H.: It is disastrous to look at things like that.

H.W.: The Lord does not work in an arbitrary way. He is working by moral ends, and they are seen by and by in the City.

E.B.: Only what is being produced now will be displayed then.

W.J.H.: Elders are seen here exactly as they will be seen then. Then it is in display, now it is in secret. I do not think we can touch the care of the saints, unless we are in white raiment, and that does not mean that our sins are forgiven. The Apostle has spoken of that in the first chapter: "Unto Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1: 5). "White raiment" has nothing to

do with that. White raiment has to do with our actions and practical life here.

T.P.: Would you say that in Paul's parting address to the Ephesian elders, he was in a sense displaying his white raiment?

W.J.H.: Quite so. "I am clear from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 26, 27). That is white raiment. The garments that we wear are not that our sins are forgiven, and we are going to Heaven. Garments are our actions, as seen publicly here. You cannot see my spirit, and you cannot see the intents of my mind and the affection in my heart, but you can see what I do. That is what I wear, and that is what has to be white if I am going to be an elder. White raiment is what can be seen. Elders are seen in white raiment, every one of them. With the Lord, as the Elder, His garments were always white. So white, says Mark, that "no fuller on earth could white them" (Mark 9: 3). There is nothing on earth to compare with the whiteness of the actions of Christ. There was no taint of pride, of sin, or of lust, in any of His actions. They were as white as the light. Our actions are not like that. If we are going to have oversight and care for the Lord's interests as elders, we must be all in white.

H.W.: It is said of the Lord: "He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."

W.J.H.: We have to wash our garments. Provision is made, in the goodness of God, for the cleansing of our garments. "These are they that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It is not that the Lord did it, but they have done it.

C.S.S.: The "white linen" is quite pure.

W.J.H.: Yes. There are no mixed motives in it. That is the value of washing our robes. The death of Christ is the place where you

cleanse your actions. We always have to do it.

H.W.: It is more to do with our motives. We have to bring our motives into the light of the death of Christ.

W.J.H.: They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is in the sacrifice of Christ that all that is pleasing to God has come to light, and all that is of this world and the flesh has been exposed.

H.W.: Would you say God helps us on these lines?

W.J.H.: I am sure He does. The moment we begin to take a real care for the Lord's interests, I believe the Spirit of God raises this question as to the motives which are in our hearts as to what we do.

G.H.: Do we not get encouraged in the Lord's ministry in marking the line the Lord moves upon?

W.J.H.: Whenever the angels are spoken of, they are spoken of as being in white. The unfallen angels have never soiled their garments. They are ministers of His which do His will. Provision is made for us to be in white, and if we are going to take up eldership amongst the saints, the Lord will raise that question with us, as to what kind of garments we have on.

G.H.: He would help us on that line.

W.J.H.: He would, indeed. It is not perfection in the flesh, but provision is made for cleansing.

W.W.: Would you say white garments suggest more than righteousness—holiness? In the 12th Hebrews, it is the outcome of God's discipline over His people, that we should be partakers of His holiness.

G.H.: I thought the Gospel of Mark was very much on that line, where the Lord was referred to as "God's servant." He would

minister to us in a way that we might be as He was, and as He is, standing in relation to God.

W.J.H.: It is that Gospel which emphasises the whiteness of the raiment more than any of the other three. Mark says more of the purity of the Lord's garments than any of them.

Dr. M.: This is really the water aspect of the death of Christ?

W.J.H.: Yes, it is.

J.S.: Would you bring in the thought in connection with John 13?

W.J.H.: Not exactly. I thought that was more in the way of the Lord's service to us, to lift our hearts and feet above the pressure of this scene, so that we might share heavenly things with Him. Let us see what is normal. An elder first takes a stand that he will maintain what is due to God, and then he will do it in white raiment, so that his motives are open. The crown of gold refers to what the saints are distinguished by. Any that have had any experience in connection with God's interests are distinguished to some extent, and that is their personal crown. The Apostle Paul had a crown. He says: "I labored more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. 15: 10). That is his crown. Possibly Peter had a crown as a shepherd. I suppose the idea is seen in every local meeting. One brother is distinguished for his hospitality; that is his crown. Another brother is helped of the Lord in the Word; that is his crown. Another brother is a pastor; he goes round and cares for the saints; that is his crown. Elders have golden crowns. It is for the glory of God, and what is for God's pleasure, that is before them.

G.H.: I suppose the idea of being kings is connected with the crown. It was a wonderful

contrast to man being under the power of the wicked one. He makes that very person superior to all the power of evil. In principle he is a "king."

W.J.H.: Yes; and it is what is of God amongst His people that enables them to rule.

G.H.: Quite.

W.J.H.: Paul says: "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4: 8). Peter speaks of the shepherds, and says: "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory." There is a crown awaiting them as an acknowledgment of the distinctiveness of their service. Here the elders have got them. Every one of them has a crown. That is only introduced to show what they do with them. It is not to say: "What a remarkable brother that is." The crown is only brought in so that they might cast it down before the throne. One would suggest that we test ourselves, to see whether we are elders, by seeing whether we cast our crowns before the throne. The Apostle Paul says: "I labored more abundantly than they all." That is his crown. But he takes it off, and casts it down, and says: "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He has a crown, but it is only to cast it down. You see that in David. He had a crown. He was taken from the sheep, and the crown of Israel was put on his head. He takes it off, and he says: "Thine, Oh Lord, is the greatness, and the glory, and the majesty, and the power." He is an elder.

G.H.: That would deliver us from self-occupation, and the idea that we ourselves have achieved anything. We recognise it is the gracious ministry of the Lord that has helped us to be of service to His people.

W.J.H.: Quite so. The elders take off their crowns, and cast them before the Throne, and say: "Thou art worthy, O Lord."

H.B.: They are distinguished by humility?

W.J.H.: Yes. We need to be exercised about it. The Lord might be helping us in one direction or another. Are we wearing our crowns? Elders never wear their crowns. They cast them down. You never hear an elder say: "I have been thirty years breaking bread, and I have stood for God, and I have done this and that." You never hear an elder talk like that. That is keeping his crown on.

G.H.: Would you say the Lord delights to make us great?

W.J.H.: I am sure He does, and this is greatness.

J.S.: You get the Lord's delight in, and His care for us in the last part of the third chapter— where we sit with Him on His throne. That is the Lord's care for us.

W.J.H.: If you are going to have a care for the interests of the Lord here, you are going to help the brethren greatly by casting down your crown before the throne. That is one way of acting as an elder towards them.

H.W.: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2: 8). It was with God's glory in view that He did all that.

W.J.H.: Yes, and He is carried up into Heaven. He does not go there; He is carried there. In Ephesians, Paul is touching perhaps the greatest crown he had. He has the greatest administration which was ever given to anybody on earth. He says: "To me it was given" (Eph. 3: 7). Then he takes off his crown, and casts it down, and says: "To me, who am less than the least of all saints" (Eph.

3: 7, 8). A novice would keep his crown on. That is what all naturally, with a chance to distinguish themselves, would do. An elder does not do that. If an elder is distinguished, it is only to take his crown off.

G.H.: Were they wearing their crowns in Corinthians 1?

W.J.H.: They were, indeed.

H.B.: They were on their thrones there.

W.J.H.: Yes. But God's throne was not in the centre. Another feature of an elder comes out in the end of the fourth chapter. Having cast their crowns before the throne, they say: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." What an elder knows is that everything is for the pleasure of God, not merely for the blessing of man, and certainly not for the exaltation of the servant. What an elder sees is that it is for the pleasure of God. "For Thy pleasure they are and were created" (verse 11).

C.S.S.: So the Lord says: "I delight to do Thy will" (Ps. 40: 8).

W.J.H.: It was for the pleasure of God.

H.B.: Would that bring in worship?

W.J.H.: It would; but what a help for the saints if we can move amongst one another, saying this as we go on: "For Thy pleasure they are and were created."

J.S.: To be here for God's pleasure, does not that carry some dignity?

W.J.H.: It does; but you do not keep the dignity. An elder takes up everything in the light of the pleasure of God. "For Thy pleasure, they are and were created." In our relations with the saints here in Adelaide, is what is really in our hearts and minds "for Thy pleasure"? Is that the object which is

really before our souls—the pleasure of God? If we are elders, it is.

W.W.: I suppose Enoch was an elder in that way. He had the consciousness that he was pleasing to God. He lived for the pleasure of God.

W.J.H.: Exactly.

W.W.: It is something worth going in for.

W.J.H.: We feel how little we have touched it, but the nearer we get to the true picture of eldership, the more that is imbedded in our souls—that it is for the pleasure of God.

E.B.: If we are set for God's pleasure, it will deepen our pleasure?

W.J.H.: Surely.

Dr. M.: We have harps and the vials in the fifth chapter.

W.J.H.: Four things in the fifth chapter are important as features of elders. One of the elders says: "Weep not" (verse 5). An elder does not weep. John is not an elder there. John sees this Book (the Book refers to God's rights on earth), and he does not see anybody who can take up God's rights and maintain them, and he weeps about it. The elders do not weep. One of the elders comes to John, and says: "Weep not."

H.W.: The elder is in the light of the mind of God.

W.J.H.: Yes, and in the light of the power of Christ. He says: "The Lion of the tribe of Juda has prevailed" (verse 5). He does not say: "The situation is impossible." He says: "Weep not; there is power in Christ to deal with this situation." The lion is the king of beasts, and does not turn back for any. The elder knows about that. The lion has power. There is power in Christ to meet any situation. The elder does not say that we are in days of utter weakness, and there is no

hope. The elder says: "There is the Lion of the tribe of Juda."

E.B.: If we wait upon Him, He will come in and display His power.

W.J.H.: When David came down into the valley of Elah, there was Goliath, and everybody was weeping. He says: "Weep not." He had defied the lion and the bear.

J.S.: That was the secret of David's power?

W.J.H.: Yes. He had learnt in regard to the lion and the bear what the Lord could do. He says: "God, that delivered me out of the hand of the bear and the lion, will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine." He is an elder.

H.W.: Difficulties arise, and we say: "There are a few leading brothers who can look after these difficulties; we will leave it to them." Is that right?

W.J.H.: I do not think so. It says: "One of the elders." Any one of them could have said this. We need to have the sense of the power of Christ. That is what an elder has.

H.W.: A sister with a sense of that in her soul is going to be a great help to the saints.

W.J.H.: Anna was such an one. You could not have a weaker position than we see in the 2nd Luke, but Anna comes out of the temple, and speaks of the Lion of the tribe of Juda.

H.B.: We have learnt that, when we have gone to one another with our difficulties, instead of bringing in the Lion of the tribe of Juda. We have overlooked the 11th Matthew: "Come unto me" (verse 28).

W.J.H.: It is open to us to encourage one another to take account of the Lion of the tribe of Juda. If we are elders, we shall say: "Weep not." There is a tendency to weep, but the elder says: "Weep not," and calls attention to what Christ can do.

W.W.: We should impart to one another the

knowledge that Christ has prevailed over every power of evil.

W.J.H.: The elder knows it because of his experience, and he is able to bring before the saints the power of Christ.

H.B.: That is what makes the Psalms so valuable. It is the experience the psalmist passed through. We ought all to have a harp?

W.J.H.: Yes. Every one of the elders fell down before the Lamb. In our affections, we are before the One Who suffered. We carry a living appreciation of the sufferings of Christ. We cannot touch eldership without that.

H.B.: That is how sympathies are formed?

W.J.H.: Yes. That keeps our affections right. Every one of the elders fell down before the Lamb.

H.B.: So that an elder is a sympathetic person? He has learnt in his experience that He is the Lion of the tribe of Juda.

W.J.H.: Peter refers to it again and again: "Christ once suffered for sins" (1 Peter 3: 18). He has a great appreciation of the One Who suffered. Paul says: "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood" (Heb. 13: 12). He is falling down before the Lamb when he says that.

W.C.: There is a good deal of difference here between the Lion of the tribe of Juda and the lamb.

W.J.H.: They are two distinct things. The Lord is the Lion of the tribe of Juda, in respect of what is due to God, but He is the Lamb in respect of what is due to Himself as man. He sacrificed everything on that line.

J.S.: Suffering is always connected with the Lamb in Scripture.

W.J.H.: Yes.

E.B.: The Passover and the Supper would have a right place in our souls as elders.

W.J.H.: Yes. If you look at an elder, you see him sitting round the throne. If you look again, you see he falls down before the Lamb—and we need both.

H.B.: The one on the line of intimacy, and the other on the line of subjection.

W.J.H.: Yes. The four living creatures and the four and twenty elders come together in that new scene. They resign in favor of Christ there. The cherubim had been protecting God's interests. They all resign in favor of Christ, and they recognise He can do it better than anybody. There are two other features. Every elder has a harp and a vial. That is to say, elders can express response to God. If I am going to be an elder, I must have a harp. If I have not a harp, I am not an elder, and if I have not a golden vial, I am not an elder. That is, I can respond to God. There is that in my affections which responds to God, and I can take up the cares and interests of the Lord's people and express them to God.

H.B.: Would you say the harp is on the line of my spirit?

W.J.H.: Yes. It is your experience with God that gave you your harp. When David came back from fighting the lion and the bear, he got out his harp, and the strings were tighter each time, and he was a man that could play well. He learned that in his experience with God.

H.B.: It is not a spirit of self-exaltation, but really a spirit of humility. That spirit would make everything of Christ, and everything of the saints, and self is left out.

W.J.H.: Quite so.

H.W.: You suggested that the strings were tightened through some trial or difficulty or experience.

W.J.H.: I thought so. That is how the elder

got his harp; his experience with God gave him a harp.

C.S.S.: The man that could play well was not one with a one-stringed instrument, but one with a ten-stringed instrument.

W.J.H.: I thought it was connected with his life of responsibility—that you had to do with God, and you got a harp in relation to that. Then there are “the golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” An elder is not indifferent to the longings of the saints. Spiritual longings exist in the locality in which he lives. He puts them in his vial, and presents them to God. It is not full of his prayers. It is full of the prayers of saints. He carries them in his heart.

H.B.: I feel that is good. I do not know very much about Adelaide, but one feels that a meeting which is missed is very often the prayer meeting. It is of immense gain to sit down and listen to the expressions of the saints. I feel it is very great, and very good.

W.J.H.: They are odours.

W.W.: Would you say the prayers ascend as sweet odours to God, and come down in blessing and refreshment to men?

W.J.H.: Yes. But the elder is seen as presenting them. The elder has a golden vial. It is not a literal thing, but the elder is deeply concerned about what the saints need, and their prayers. He carries them in his heart. If there is some little desire in our souls to have a real concern for what is for God, He will help us along these lines.

G.H.: What we have now is of the Lord, formed by the Spirit in our souls. It is connected with the “all things.” “All things were created for Thy pleasure.”

FRESHNESS AND EXPERIENCE.

Address at Orange, N.S.W., October, 1924.

Song of Solomon 5: 11 Revelation 1: 14.

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven."

"His head and his hairs were white like wool—as white as snow."

One is impressed with the word of Joseph to his brethren: "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory." The Lord would have testimony rendered as to all His glory. We are only able to take in a little of all His glory at a time, but how we would cherish in our hearts every fresh ray that reaches us. The Holy Spirit is here for this express purpose, as it says: "He shall glorify me," and, again, "He shall take of mine and show it unto you." The Spirit of God is engaged amongst the saints, bringing before them again and again fresh impressions of the greatness and glory of Christ. One could not attempt to speak of all His glory, but would like to bring before us two thoughts from these scriptures that may be used to bring home to us afresh some sense of His glory in the connections they are found. While the Song of Solomon may literally refer to the mutual love between Christ and Israel, I think in a higher way still it can be taken as expressing what the Church enjoys of the love of Christ, and her answer to it. In this response, how she delights to trace His features; she speaks of them all, and in each discerns some distinctive glory. To-day one would dwell on what she says of His locks. They are seen to be "bushy, black as a raven."

As the Church contemplates Christ, she sees in Him the evidence of perennial youth, as Psalm 110 says of Him: "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth." Of Ephraim, in Hosea, it says he has grey hairs here and there, and knows it not. Evidence of decline, loss of vigor and energy could be seen in Ephraim, witnessed by the grey hairs here and there, arising from his having come under the power and influence of strangers. It is as the alien influence of worldly principles of pride and lust is accepted by the people of God that decline sets in, and grey hair is seen here and there, and, alas, often we do not know it. But not so the Lord Jesus. His hair is seen to be "black as a raven." Solomon is Christ in glory. David is Christ in suffering, conflict and reproach. How one rejoices to see that the Lord Jesus as glorified has carried over into eternity in untarnished vigor and freshness all that so enraptures our hearts, as portrayed in His life here on earth in each of the Gospels. All that has altered are the conditions He is found in—but all that He was, as man, morally, in each of the Gospels, can be seen now carried over beyond time and death, in undiminished freshness and vigor. Let us look at the four Gospels in this way. Matthew specially speaks of the Lord in connection with His power and authority, mighty in deed and word. He acts and speaks with authority. He is the King in Matthew, wielding the power of the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. That power is as great at the end as at the beginning. Well, Matthew carries all that He is, as king, over beyond death, where time does not enter, and presents Him there as king, with hair "black as a raven"—the Lord presents Himself in Matthew as out of death with the words, "All hail." He is still the king. Then He says: "All power is given to me in heaven and earth."

As king, He has all power in His hand, in eternal freshness and vigor.

Mark's special presentation of the Lord is as God's servant. How unwearied and unceasing is His service in Mark. How often the words "immediately, straightway, forthwith, anon" are used in Mark's Gospel. In John He is said to be "weary," but not in Mark. His service is as vigorous at the end as at the beginning. Then Mark sees all that the Lord Jesus was in this character pass over to resurrection and glory as he says: "He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." Mark sees that blessed Servant, His locks bushy and black as a raven, His service still going on in undiminished vigor.

Luke is occupied largely with the Lord as priest—coming from God to men, filled with compassion and the blessing of Heaven. It says of the priest that "he shall stand and bless in His name." How blessedly those compassions are maintained as full, as deep, as vigorous at the end towards Peter in his recovery and the thief in his repentance, as they were at the beginning, when, in Luke 4, the Lord "began to say" such gracious words. Well, Luke sees all that is so sweet in the life of Jesus transferred to resurrection, so he presents the Lord leading His own out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up His hands and blessing them—that is, He sees the priest with "locks bushy and black as a raven." No decay, no diminishing of all that priestly grace that had so engaged Luke's heart.

While John includes all that the other writers do, he is specially engaged with that presentation of Christ that will bring the hearts of men into the light of the revelation of God as Father. At the outset, John speaks

of the Lord as being "the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father," and all through the Gospel the burden is that men should enjoy the blessed revelation of God brought here by the Son. At the beginning, He is "in the bosom of the Father"; at the end He can say: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Well, John presents all this carried over into resurrection, in the words to Mary: "My Father and your Father." He sees the Son in manhood, the Blessed Revealer of the heart of God, and He sees Him as ascending, His "locks bushy and black as a raven" in this connection.

Now, coming to Revelation 1—we have exactly an opposite view of the Lord, for here it is said that His hair was white like wool—white as snow." His glory now is that He is seen as One above all others as "The Elder." There is the evidence of great age, long experience, with all that wisdom which experience gives. He is the "Ancient of Days," and, as such, can be trusted with all the interests of God, both in relation to the Church and the earth. A novice cannot be trusted, but a true elder can be. I would like to show that all the features of an elder find their perfect expression in the Lord Jesus.

I think the 4th and 5th of Revelation give us a perfect description of what marks elders, and I would like to show how fully these features were seen in the Lord Jesus here on earth. The first point is that elders are seen on thrones, but their thrones are around the throne of God, and they are seen sitting. They are settled as to the influence they exercise, that it is in relation to the throne of God. They never move from that position. They sit there.

How perfectly this is seen in the Lord Jesus. In the temptations, Satan sought to move the

Lord, to set His throne in relation to Himself, as man, instead of in relation to God. But how quietly the Lord is seen throughout, sitting around God's throne, unmoved by every temptation. Later on, Satan uses Peter to attempt to move the Lord from this position, without avail, and again at Gethsemane, how settled the Lord is, that what is for God should at all costs be secured.

How much sorrow and trouble has come amongst the saints by those who take the place of elders, moving their thrones from around God's throne, and setting them in relation to themselves, or their families, or what is earthly and social. A true elder exercises all the influences he has in regard to what is due to God, and not in regard to what may be thought due to himself, or to his family. If our thrones are not around God's throne, the Lord cannot trust us with His interests.

The next feature of eldership is that all are clothed in white garments. Garments, in Scripture, I think, refer to our actions. They indicate what can be seen. Our thoughts, our affections, our motives, cannot be seen, but everyone can take account of what we do, and if the Lord is to trust us, we need to be in white garments. It is said of the Lord that His garments were white as the light. Mark says: "exceeding white as no fuller on earth could whiten them." Every action of His was untainted by a stain of any trace of pride or lust. Indeed, each action "glistened" with the very radiance of Heaven.

Then the elders have golden crowns. They are divinely distinguished, but true elders never wear their crowns. It says they fell down before the throne, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and

were created." If the spirit of eldership is with us, we shall never be seen wearing anything that would distinguish us. A novice would do that—not an elder. How all this shines out so in the Lord. How He was distinguished of God here. His works distinguished Him; also His words. He did all things well, and never man spoke like Him. But what does He say as to His works? And His words: "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." "Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee, for I have given unto them the words that Thou hast given Me." He casts down His crown, yea, all His crowns, for on His head are many crowns. But, in effect, He says: "Thou art worthy."

One greatly enjoys the Lord's words: "They have known that all things are of Thee." He did not hide it. He took not the glory of all things that He had, but He says: "They know they are of Thee," and Peter, who heard His words, is careful to say: "Neither was guile found in His mouth." He meant "every" word that was spoken.

Dear brethren, is the Lord helping any of us in our localities, some to labor in the Word, some to visit and care for the sheep of His pasture, some to show hospitality, others to care for the poor—whatever it may be He distinguishes us by. We cannot be trusted if wearing our crowns. Let us cast them down, and say: "Thou art worthy, O Lord." How Paul came to this, Paul the aged, he says: "I labored more abundantly than they all." What a crown he had as a laborer. Then, true elder as he was, he says: "Yet not I—but the grace of God, which was with me." He cast his crown before the throne.

After this, in chapter five, we see John weeping. No one was found able to open the book.

No one could be found to take up and secure the rights of God on the earth, and John weeps much. But the elders do not weep. Indeed, one of them says: "Weep not." Any elder could have said this, for elders never weep such tears as John's—tears of hopelessness. Elders are in the secret of the power of Christ. The Lion Who will never turn back. Whatever difficulties there may be amongst us, however seemingly hopeless the outlook, true elders know there is power in Christ to meet every situation, so they can say: Weep not."

This is what marked the Lord here. Could a more terrible and hopeless position be seen than when the Lord went to the cross—and Mary wept there—but He said: "Weep not for Me." He knew of power, of the surpassing greatness of the power of God that would overthrow even death. The next thing said of the elders is that they all fall down before the Lamb, as slain. One can hardly apply this to the Lord personally, but I am sure it is a feature of eldership with us, that there is a profound appreciation of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb that was slain—of the One Who suffered for our redemption.

If we lose in our hearts the response to this, we may continue outwardly to take up care, etc., but I am sure we are entirely disqualified in the sight of the Lord, and it will be reflected in a certain hardness in our spirits.

See this in that elder, Peter. "Your fellow elder," he says, addressing elders, "Christ once suffered for sins," he writes. I am sure as he wrote that he fell down before the Lamb. Again, "redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ as a Lamb."

Paul also, falling down as he writes: "Jesus . . . suffered without the gate—let us go forth to Him."

Well, just a word or two more. Every elder has a harp—"every one of them," it says. His experience with God would teach Him to know God in such a way as to form chords in his heart, upon which he makes melody to the Lord. What an asset to have such in each local company.

Pre-eminently, this is seen in the Lord; though refused by Chorazin and Bethsaida, and pronouncing woe to these cities, yet towards God He is seen with His harp: "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth." He is the greatest musician of Scripture.

Then the elders have golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. Elders are able to gather up the spiritual longings of the saints and present them to God. It is not exactly their own prayers in the golden vials, but those odours arising out of the longings of the saints. Elders are not indifferent to the exercises and desires existent amongst the saints, but in touch with them, and carry such in their hearts before God. One would again seek to see this in all its beauty in the Lord Jesus. I think it is suggested in the case of Nathaniel. That Israelite had true desires. He really longed, in the midst of all the evil and hypocrisy of Israel, to see a "good thing"—and the Lord had taken account of the guilelessness of his desires, and had put them into His golden vial to satisfy.

So with Zacchaeus. He would see Jesus, Who He was. No mere desire of curiosity, that—but an odour taken account of and put into the golden vial of the Great Elder.

I think such was also seen in the prayers by the riverside in Phillipi. Those desires came up as odours, taken account of by the Lord, and met by Him.

Well, dear brethren, one rejoices that so

many in this day are giving up the idea that Christianity is simply believing certain facts about the work of Christ, in order that we might escape judgment, and go to Heaven by and by.

This is not Christianity. There is nothing in Scripture that would in any way support such an idea—and it is overlooking entirely the present work of the Holy Spirit—which is as great as the work of Christ. Christianity, I think, is this: “Which thing is true in Him and in you”—and the Spirit of God is here to make what is true in Christ as Man also true in the saints, and one would earnestly desire that these two glories might be more wrought in us.

First: That we might be here maintained continually in freshness and vigor. It is a great exercise to be maintained in freshness. The Lord will have His Church without a wrinkle—no evidence of age and decrepitude there. It is, I feel, as we have our hearts open to the gracious activities of the Spirit in bringing Christ before us that this can be.

Then that there might be found amongst us those features of eldership in each locality that the Lord has set us in.

It says of the virtuous woman: “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.” As appreciating the Lord Jesus, as having all that would command the confidence of God, one feels in measure the same takes form in the saints. Right at the close as we now are, let us seek to be so under His influence, as to be here as those He can trust with His interests.

—W.J.H.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

Scriptures:—Romans 8: 28-31. Colossians 2: 6-10. Ephesians 3: 14-21.

I wanted to say a word or two, beloved, as simply as I can, on the great value of the love of God. It is really overwhelming if you think of it for a moment—think that God loves you. By that I do not mean that He has pity for you, or that He has consideration for you—both of which I believe He has. But that God loves you. You say: "I cannot understand." I say: "Neither can I." There are a good number of things you can enjoy that you cannot understand. It is not intended to be a subject of mental understanding. It is intended to be enjoyed, and God sets His love on you for your enjoyment. I believe the ultimate end of everything with God is to have the universe as happy as He is Himself. He sets His love on man, in order to bring about through man happiness in the universe. You can understand that at the present time the angels have a lot to do. They are unceasingly occupied, because there is a multitude of the heirs of salvation to be seen through. When God has secured His end, they will have less labor; they will be able to return to their service in regard to God and His attributes, because the heirs of salvation will be outside the need of salvation for ever. I merely cite this to show how God's end is going to be reached by way of God reaching it in man.

I wanted to come to the subject by way of the individual—you yourself personally. Now in Romans it is pretty clear from that passage that certain things are in the mind of God in

regard to His people. They are not worked out in His people. Far from it! They are in the mind of God for His people. It is in the mind of God that His people should be glorified. He has already made up His mind that we should be like Christ. You are to be conformed to the image of His Son. That is God's mind, and God has not only got that mind, but He has graciously expressed it, so that we know that God intends us to be like Christ. We are going to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is like an architect—the whole question is schemed out, and every little bit fitted in its right place. You may see a lump of timber—a log of oak, perhaps—you may say: "What are you going to do with that?" It looks a large clumsy piece of wood. You say to the architect: "What about that?" He says: "Come here for a moment," and he takes you to a picture of the building, in which there is an immense guest chamber, in which you see a beautifully carved beam, and he says: "That is your oak." That is it in the architect's mind. He says: "You have seen it in the rough—you have seen the oak with a great deal that will have to be removed—now you have seen it in the picture when the workmanship is completed." I like to think of the completed thing. Do you not like to think of the completed thing in the mind of God? Have you ever conceived what God intended when He first spoke to you? I press this. People say: "What do you mean by loving God?" Speaking simply, I think God presents Himself to you in such a way that He wins your heart. That is what I think. I do not think it means a person who has been converted for a long long while—no! It is the person to whom God has presented Himself in such a way that He has won the heart. Speaking practically about love, you will meet a good many people who

are in love. They are not always particularly true to the object of their affection, but when they are in love, they revert to it, and, during the little periods when the person seems to be out of love, he is not true to his faith. So, when God presents Himself to the soul and gets a hold of the soul, that soul might be said to love God. This world may come in, the flesh may come in, or Satan may come in, but remember this—underneath the surface there is present a link that God has got with them which is never lost. However low down one may fall, this is so. However they stray, they love God.

You will agree that "all things" is a very large expression. It is not one detail. It is not a mass of detail. It is everything. "All things" are "All things." Talking about all things working together for good, the only way to discover how they work is to go to the architect, and ask him for the plan. You may see in the history of a believer, a period when things seem to be thrown down in useless heaps, masses of doctrine here and there, but a little bit of Christ that has taken shape amongst it all. All you have to remember is that you have come across that believer when things are just being constructed. There are times in a believer's history when construction is taking place, and at these moments the unspiritual eye would be occupied with the mass of material there, and not with the operation that is going on. The operation in the commencement of building a foundation necessitates a tremendous lot of bricks and mortar all heaped together. There is no particular form in the foundations—the great point is **solidity**; and I want to say a word on how all things work together for good in the solidifying of the soul in the love of God. I should like to speak simply.

It used to be said in the early days of the people of God—an old saying which I would recall to your minds: "Every Christian must pass through the 7th of Romans." Now that is quite right, and I shall put it into present day language. I say: "It is an absolute necessity for the love of God to be placed on a solid foundation."

The 7th of Romans is like the mass of material. I tell you what, when you get that properly put down and solidified, it is a platform on which you can put your feet. This platform leaves you free to turn your eye Godward. He loves you, and that is the way His love works. He says I love you too well to let you put your confidence in man, of whom I could make nothing—that is why I introduced My Son. I brought Him in because it was absolutely hopeless to try and make anything of any other man I could find. I brought My Son in, and I love you so much, so well, that I am never going to rest until you are to Me what My Son is. There is a lot to be done, but things are easily done if the foundations will stand it. The difficulty is to get the foundations solidified to stand it. If there is the slightest bit of confidence in Adam, you will fall.

I have known people fifty years in fellowship to whom, getting on towards their end, I have said: "You will be happy soon." They say: "I don't really know whether I shall." I say: "What have you been doing all your life?" They have said: "I could minister, and people liked it, etc." I say again: "What have you been doing?" I know. You have had fifty years of confidence in Adam. The whole structure goes down. God loves us too well to allow that; hence, in His foundation work, God would rake us up, and shake us up, and bring us to this conclusion—"in my flesh good does not dwell." I love God. All things work

together for good to them that love God. This actual experience has been working for good, and I do not know anything that would be of greater delight to God than to get every one of us solidly clear on this fact, that there is not a shred of man that you could have any confidence in, so that you are perfectly clear to turn to God, and find what He is. He simply says: "I intend to justify you. I intend to glorify you. I am going to make you like My own Son." You may well say: "I have a brilliant future in front of me—going to be justified, glorified, and made like His Son."

If I asked you whether you could find a justified man in England, what would you say? You would have to go out of the country to find a justified man; that is, you would need to go to a heavenly country, and there you see a justified man—Christ. Christ is a justified man. God has it in His mind to justify you. He loves you to the extent that He is never going to rest until you are as high in His approval as Christ is. Justification has to do with the responsible history of a man, and glory has to do with the man's ambitions and outlook. Most men are after glory, and they get it. Man's glory bursts like a bubble, and it is gone. God intends to glorify you. He sets you on a line of longings that reach a consummation where you find a glorified man, Christ crowned with glory and honor. God is not going to rest until you are crowned alongside Christ.

Now I come to the third point. Like His Son. I do not mean physical likeness, but that you will have intimacy with the Father as He has. You will be let into the secret of the Father's heart—like the Son is. I am speaking of Christ in manhood, gone back to the Father. Think of it! The same intimacy with the Father. Think of God as Father discussing

His heart with you. That is God's intention. I want to come to how it works out. I think that is what Colossians gives us. I would like to use the word, "pattern," because I think Christ represents the thing in the way of pattern. Think of anything you want! Perhaps you say: "I wish I were happy." Do you really mean that? Well, I find out whether it is God's intention that I should be happy, because if God intends you to be unhappy, nothing in the universe will make you happy. Jonah is an illustration of that. Jonah set his face in the direction of opposition to the will of God, and God intended him to be unhappy. He could not be happy on land, or on sea, or anywhere else. God did not intend him to be happy. He intended the man to learn the miserable results of sin. At last he gave it up. God says I think I can now get to conditions of happiness. God has to break down the line of opposition to Himself and teaches us to love Him, to break it down. "Salvation is of the Lord." Now you may begin to be happy. You may not love Him much, because you may not know Him enough to love Him much. We have to turn to Christ to see the exact pattern of a happy man. I have received Him as Lord, and as Lord He has been vested with divine authority to consummate the thought of God for us. Moses would secure for the people of God what was in the mind of God for them. Moses was so beautiful, that they could not look at his face. The glory was so great. When you come to Christ, you say: "He died for my sins." "He taught me to love God." Yes, and more! Christ is the one man who expresses all that God would like you to have. Colossians tells us: "In Christ all the fullness of the Godhead abides bodily." It is all there. You do not want to go out of Christ for any divine thing.

I do not know anything more encouraging than to be able to turn to that glorious Man, and as I look at Christ to realise that every thought of God is there expressed.

Perhaps I go to a house to spend the week-ends, and on the Saturday night the person whose house it is says to me, "Will you take the Gospel?" I go to the brother and ask him if he has a lexicon, as I am taking the Gospel next evening, I want to look up some things, some Scriptures. He says, "I want you to take the Gospel to-morrow night; I want you to convey to those present what is in the mind of God for them. I want you to give them an impression of God." Every thought of God is in Christ. You might look up a suitable text, but you must go to Christ for an impression of God. In the 4th of John the woman did not know she had been talking to Christ. She says, "When the Messiah comes, etc." We find all that God wants in Christ. Have you found that Man? I do not doubt many a believer in his early exercises would like to express divine things, would try to look it up and to learn it; but what is required is that you find Christ. It is all there. When you find Christ you will find you are complete in Him. We do not need to go out of Christ to find the divine pattern. When a brother speaks, what you want is to get an impression of Christ through him. Now, how do you come into it? It is one thing to enjoy it, another to come into it.

I think prayer in Ephesians brings us into it. I think all things are introduced to you by way of prayer. I think the inlet of anything to the soul comes by prayer. I understand prayer to be the state of the soul, Godward. The sight of what is in Christ pro-

duces longing. I am in a state for the reception of this wonderful idea that I have seen for me in Christ. Then you get the mighty working of the Spirit of God in the inner man. I would say a word about the inner man. You get the might of the Spirit working in the inner man. We are not physically changed. Do not think if you have a violent temper it is going to disappear immediately. He lets the outer man perish, and he strengthens the inner man. The man that loves God—he is the inner man. Christ is not only the Object as patterning the divine idea, but the Spirit takes up the matter, and He begins to form the man so that the most violent-tempered man in the world becomes the expression of meekness and grace, which has never been seen before except in Christ. That is a strong inner man. In fact, the inner man has ascendancy over the outer man—wonderful thing—brought about that you might become expressive of the thing you want to express. There is no limit to what God can do according to the power that works in us. God must be supreme. I have felt a very extraordinary feeling lately. I feel we shall not be here long. I have sometimes sat down to weigh it over. What is it that is going to lift millions of the people of God out of vessels of humiliation into vessels of glory in an instant? It is the power that works in us—the operation of the Holy Spirit of God that is working in us to-day. What is He doing to-day? Working everything together for good to them that love God. The Spirit never misses an opportunity—never fails on an occasion. His great object would be to strengthen the inner man, so that He brings you to see the things in Christ, and He teaches you the love of Christ. What is

it? I believe the love of Christ is this—that He would have the Church like Himself. So He would not be content with you as an individual believer. His love would not rest until you find yourself as a part of the whole company of believers in Christ. You cannot take it in, but you can enjoy it. You have lost your individuality in the conscious sense that you are part of the vast company of saints on earth. God has one supreme interest on earth—the Assembly. It is the vessel that God has formed as adequate to satisfy His own love. He says you are to be like My Son—our personal place for ever. Every person has a personal place—has some definite link and feature in the divine family of first-born. One will not lose one's distinctiveness there. You will remain for ever the intelligent witness of how the love of God came to you.

My object in speaking thus is that in these last days we might cleave to this fact that God has expressed His mind—He has brought Christ into evidence. The Spirit is sent so that Christ may be formed in His people to-day.

—E. J. McB.

(Unrevised.)

“It is fresh truth which tests the soul, and faith. Old truth, generally received, and by which a body of people are distinguished from those around them, may be a subject of pride to the flesh, even where it is the truth, as was the case with the Jews. But fresh truth is a question of faith in its source; there is not the support of a body accredited to it, but the cross of hostility and isolation.”—J.N.D.



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