

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 208

July 1990

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"OUR COMMONWEALTH" – III

Judges 1: 1-19; Malachi 3: 16 -18; 2 Corinthians 2: 12-17; 8: 16 -18; 12: 17,18

J.A.G. In looking yesterday to the Lord for help in the understanding and appreciation of the greatness of what Paul refers to in Philippians as "our commonwealth", we read in Philippians 3, in Romans 5 and 2 Peter 1 and then went on to the history of Abraham as developing in him the features of the heavenly man characteristically. It was thought today that these scriptures would help us to see the importance of the inter-relations amongst the brethren in the commonwealth. Peter says we are to "love one another out of a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God", 1 Pet 1: 22,23. I thought that these chapters would help us to appreciate one another in the working out of the truth. Joshua is not here now, there is no distinctive evidence of leadership, but there is dependence on God amongst the brethren and brotherly love and concern that we should acquire the inheritance together. I believe as these features are with us in operation we will be able to touch what was there at the beginning which Othniel and Achsah would suggest, the great Ephesian side of things in Christ and the assembly.

L.McF. I feel we need the Spirit's help to get the gain of what you have in your mind. Is the feature of mutuality prominent in these scriptures, that is, that we make room for one another?

J.A.G. We need all the brethren; there is not one person to be left out. So as things get darker the fear of God is to be increasingly with us. It says in Malachi that they spoke of ten one to another. It draws out the greatness of divine pleasure and approbation. Think of that book being written before God: "a book of remembrance was written before him" and He says, They are very special to Me. The recovery is exceptionally special to God; I suppose that the recovery of the truth is the prime matter to heaven at the moment. 2 Corinthians is a great book of the ministers; it all belongs to the

common wealth, the overseers and ministers and the inter-relations between them. Think of the value that Paul places on one of them when he says "Titus my brother"; and the great love that Titus had for the brethren – "the same diligent zeal for you in the heart of Titus". And then he says, "have we not walked in the same spirit? ... in the same steps? " There was in them the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is a very elevated position in second Corinthians, and I think probably the last verse in Ephesians covers the whole position – " Peace to the brethren". That is to be our attitude, "and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption".

J.A.P. It is also a feature of the Philippian epistle with which you started. He says there, "but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also", chap 2: 3,4. And that leads on to that great response as to the Lord Jesus; how great He is, yet He first took a bondman's place.

J.A.G. I think that is very beautiful. You can see the heavenly features of Philippi going through all these scriptures. He says they had him in their hearts and he longed after them all in the bowels of Christ Jesus (see Phil 1: 8). That is the bond between Paul and the brethren and that is to be between the brethren generally. It is almost an impossibility for me to esteem somebody else in a way better than myself because everybody is so good in Philippians: "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves". If you esteem me more excellent than yourself and I esteem you more excellent than myself, that really is something. What a state of things that would be, beloved!

E.F.C. Would you say that spiritual friendship is a test to us? The word '*phileo*' is the love of friendship. I wondered if the Philippian name has come from that in some sense.

J.A.G. I would think so. I think that one of the hallmarks of the revival is brotherly love. The epistle to Philemon is the great '*phileo*'

epistle, I understand.

C.F.D. How do you work out esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves? Here is a young brother, 18 years old, coming into the room: what are your thoughts about him?

J.A.G. He is more excellent than you.

C.F.D. And how do you arrive at that?

J.A.G. Because he belongs to Christ. In the Synopsis on Philippians 2 Mr Darby refers to Elisha ploughing with twelve yokes of oxen before him (see 1 Kings 19: 19). There he is, working out the truth with the brethren and saying, They are all more excellent than me. Now the prophet will take him on from that point of view. But you help us.

C.F.D. It is something we need to think about because it is very practical. You see a young man eighteen years old come in and he is remembering the Lord; it is very easy for me to look at him and say he is more excellent than I am because I did not remember the Lord until I was twenty. If we look for these features in each other I think we can find them in a very practical kind of way.

S.E.MacC. Did Joseph's brethren have to come to this when he made himself known to them? When he said their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf they did not esteem him at all but they came to it later, did they not?

J.A.G. Yes; it was through discipline. The Lord brings us to it for He is looking for Benjamin. Joseph is looking for his brother his bowels burned for his brother Benjamin. We are in the presence of holy and deep emotions in Joseph that have been expressed in Christ for the brethren. We do well to consider that and evaluate the beloved brethren according to the valuation that God places on them.

R.N.H. Job prayed for each of his erring friends. Would that be the product of self-judgment with Job?

J.A.G. He is a very wonderful person. He is another one who would not have a great problem esteeming everyone else more excellent than himself. At one time he really thought he was outstandingly

righteous but he came to it that all subsists on the basis of the burnt-offering.

J.A.P. When Job was wrong he said to his friends: "whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock", Job 30: 1.

J.A.G. And he was somebody, you know. We have to come to that. Through all those chapters he can argue the point with everybody, but then God comes in and He brings him down. Finally he says, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but how mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes", Job 42: 5 ,6. Then you begin to esteem everybody else more excellent than yourself and that is the righteous basis on which you should stand.

J.McK. God kept Elihu in reserve. He does not know what they know but there is the Spirit of Jehovah in a man and he brings out the truth from God's side as to what was needed.

J.A.G. Exactly; Elihu is a brother in self judgment. He is maybe this eighteen year old that we were speaking about. He says, "I am as thou" – there is no difference between me and you – "formed out of the clay", but I desire to justify you, I have feelings for you, I want to get you on the right platform. And he moves in such a way t hat God comes into the whole proceedings.

J.McK. Justification is a vital matter with us, that no matter what is being said we justify God.

J.A.G. We justify God, we do not seek to justify ourselves. We had that I suppose in Abraham yesterday: "Let your gentleness be known of all", Phil 4: 5. What a thing that is, beloved!

L.McF. Just another thought as to Job: Jehovah turned his captivity when he prayed for his friends. What is priestly seemed to have developed in him through this discipline.

J.A.G. He is a great man, he stands beside Noah and Daniel. "Though... Noah, Daniel and Job", God says to Ezekiel, be in the land, "they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness",

Ezek 14: 14. These men are true Philippians, personalities, you might say in principle, that belong to the commonwealth.

We should look at Judges because it is possible, in the days in which we live, to touch the great thoughts of God in relation to Christ and the assembly through dependence on God. There is no distinctive leadership; I do not know that God is going to have it. So they inquire and God says, My ideals and my standards still remain, Judah goes up first. Divine sovereignty still remains.

E.F.C. Judah prevailed, he broke through at a very testing time and put his life so to speak on the altar on behalf of his brethren in order that the situation might be saved. I was thinking of his consideration now for Simeon his brother. It says of Simeon and Levi that instruments of violence were in their hands (see Gen 49: 5) and yet Judah takes account of Simeon in this matter as being nearest to him.

J.A.G. The breathings of the Spirit of Christ in Genesis are very beautiful. "Ah, my lord", he says to Joseph as he thinks about his father and his brethren (see Gen.44: 18). That is the breath of John 20; he is living, you might say, in the breath of another Man. Joseph could not fail to link on with Judah as he exhibited his own spirit in relation to his father and his brethren.

J.R.C. It is open to every one of us, if we gain Christ, to manifest the features of Christ.

J.A.G. It is the evidence of that kind of humanity amongst the brethren. Judah cannot get his inheritance without Simeon, and Simeon cannot get his without Judah, because Simeon's inheritance actually is in the middle of Judah's. I think Simeon would need a bit of encouragement; his numbers were reduced in the wilderness while Judah gained. We need to be able to encourage one another. "Come up with me", he says, let us go up together, let us be in this thing together, we will fight against the Canaanites. We should come into the gain of the ministry that has gone before us so that we arrive practically at the working out of the truth of Christ and the assembly.

C.S.E. When Jacob called his sons together he said, "I will tell you what will befall you at the end of days", Gen 49: 1. Then of Judah he says, "as to thee, thy brethren will praise thee; Thy hand will be upon the neck of thine enemies; Thy father's children will bow down to thee" (v 8). You might say that God would honour Jacob's prophecy with regard to Judah, and what was needed after the death of Joshua was somebody to help the brethren to go further.

J.A.G. I think that is fine. Jacob could see the features of the overcomer in Judah and that was going to extend right through to the time when it says, "Our Lord has sprung out of Juda", Heb 7: 14.

We had a fine address some years ago by Mr Duncan Fraser from Glasgow on Judah in the scripture in Genesis and then in Deuteronomy, the whole thing heading up in Christ, and the lion of the tribe of Juda has prevailed so as to open the book (see Rev 5: 5). It is a lion that is coming in in dominance to claim the inheritance for God. And that is possible, beloved, today in days of recovery.

J.McK. Would you say why you chose the reference to this in Judges while we have the same reference in Joshua? Is it to bring out more the brotherly covenant that we find here rather than what you get in Joshua where the land is being appropriated?

J.A.G. Judges is really our day and it is going on. Later on things decline but they are not declining here and Caleb is still here. Caleb is not a gifted man but he is the product, you might say, of the ministry of Moses and the leadership of Joshua. And that line substantially carries through the truth and maintains and extends the evidence of Christ and the assembly in the meetings.

J.McK. I think that is very helpful, and I feel the urge of the Spirit today is to bring us into what has been presented attractively in the ministry and to go in for what God has been pleased to bring us into.

J.A.G. I am sure that is the case. I have a feeling that there is an upsurge in revival going on amongst the brethren. I feel quite encouraged by it. We need to keep humble about it because the devil will be active to quench it.

J.A.P. I think your suggestion about Caleb is good. He really relates to John's ministry in life. That is what you are referring to, that there is life among the brethren and that is the basis for the atmosphere of recovery.

J.McK. We need the spirit of Caleb; "What wouldest thou?" he says to Achsah, and we should look for the answer.

J.A.G. We should be able to say that to the young persons; the whole wealth of the land is before them. Caleb is a man of tremendous resource; whatever you want he will give you. If you want the land you have the favour of God, you have the south country, and she says; Well, I want it to be maintained in fertility, I want it to be productive. We are not wanting dry, boring, meetings, we are wanting meetings where the Spirit is free in every direction, where there is freshness and vitality and production, where there is tremendous interest.

T.E.D. Desire is a great matter. There was Achsah's desire and then that man Jabez who wanted his border enlarged: "Oh that thou wouldest richly bless me, and enlarge my barrier", 1 Chron 4: 10. Would that promote this increase in the spirit of revival?

J.A.G. I think it would. I received help from Mr Coates' outline of the Book of Chronicles, which he refers to as the book of life. All these names in Chronicles, he says, are like the book of life, and Jabez is among them. His desire was that evil might not grieve him. He comes in, in principle, from among those that fear the Lord, and he was concerned that nothing would intrude into his life that would cause grief – "that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!".

T.E.D. What we want is not for ourselves; just like esteeming the brother more excellent than ourselves, we want it for God's pleasure.

J.A.G. That is right. I think all this is going to culminate in a great wealth of response to God. So the close of the dispensation is not just going to be that folk are merely holding on but that they are there substantially and in power and they are loving our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption.

J.McK. In Chronicles the headship of David is carried right through to the end, in Solo mon.

J.A.G. It is very beautiful that the whole position is girt about with love for God. The affections of the brethren are gathered together in headship; the Lord's headship gathers it all together and He presents it all to God, just as the Son Himself is placed in subjection that God may be all in all (see 1 Cor 15: 28). What a wonderful finale to this great and glorious day of grace, that morally that is the case in the meetings.

L.McF. What would be the oppression of the Canaanite at the present time, this power that is against the testimony?

J.A.G. I think it is the various elements that the devil would use to keep the brethren out of the enjoyment of the inheritance. It is very beautiful that all this comes into the book of Judges because it shows that the church militant is the same at the close as she was at the beginning. They are capable here of leading captive every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God. The man is led captive, he is brought into the obedience of the Christ. There is no lowering of the standard or weakening of the force of military prowess. I think it is a very beautiful setting of things and it is sustained in brotherly love and in dependence on God.

J.McK. Was not the Canaanite connected with the trader? One of the things the enemy is using today is the affluence that can afford to go into man's system and to what the Canaanite would develop in you.

J.A.G. I think so. I think it is something to be concerned about. I remember Mr Gardiner giving a word a long time ago in which he said, Not only does John say "Love not the world" but he says "Love not the world, nor the things in the world", 1 John 2: 15. We can look back to a day when nobody had motor cars and brethren had to walk to the meeting. These are practical things; they walked for miles to get to the Supper and they walked for miles to get to a reading. It is a different day now. While God has given us all these things in His goodness and beneficence we are to use them for Him. It is all right

as long as they are used for God's glory. I think we were speaking yesterday about the whole system of communications and how easy it is to get from place to place now. All that is under the hand of God in view of this final crowning position that is going to be brought in the revival of the truth.

T.E.D. I was thinking about that as to visiting amongst the brethren, what a great opportunity it is for the furtherance of the commonwealth and the enjoyment of our heavenly inheritance. The provision of travel is, as you say, made available and it should be used to that end.

J.A.G. I think that is what is in God's mind in any resource that He may give, that we should use it for Him and that we should exploit the greatness of the commonwealth. Because the house of God is the same in every place, no matter what country and the wealth that is in it is the same, and we need to search it out.

K.A.O. We can go treasure hunting, can we not ?

J.A.G. Very good! "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be", Luke 12: 34.

K.A.O. That scripture that we read in Malachi is a beautiful reference to the saints. Some people go treasure hunting looking for rocks and precious things, but we need to have a greater valuation of the treasure in the saints, what there is in the hearts of the saints, that field where the treasure is for which the Lord gave Himself.

J.A.G. I think so because He has done it all apart from us. I remember a few years ago that my father met a brother whom he knew from his youth, but who was in another fellowship, and the man said, Well, we have had a link for a long time. My father said, Yes, and we did not make the link. You did not make the link, the Lord made the link and that link abides. Hence the importance of this brotherly condition that is going to foster and strengthen these links in the truth.

J.A.P. Would that extend to our neighbouring localities? What is needed around the world is that we are brotherly with our

neighbouring brethren, yet respecting the Lord's rights in that locality.

J.A.G. I think that is very beautiful. Timothy was a man like that: he had a good report of the brethren in the two localities next to him and he would be going along seeking to foster and develop this kind of link. And there is no feature of the truth at all in which any one cannot do without some improvement. The greatest room in the world is the room for improvement. And that is true for every one, that we should be developing neighbourly and brotherly links together.

S.E.H. Judah and Simeon in Judges each had their own inheritance which they helped each other into – Jerusalem and the hill-country.

In Joshua 19 it speaks of the inheritance of the children of Simeon as being within the inheritance of the children of Judah because the portion of the children of Judah was too great for them.

J.A.G. There were those who received their inheritance directly from Joshua, but then there were those like the rest of us who had their inheritance at Shiloh. We get our inheritance from heaven, and that is like Joshua the great scope of things; our inheritance is inside that. We need one another to develop the inheritance, and the great thought about the inheritance is eternal life, gaining Christ, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 8.

Unless we have that, God cannot get His inheritance. When you come to the service of God and your heart is full of joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for all that He has done for us and the greatness of who He is, if we have not cultivated and developed our inheritance there is going to be a lack of substance with us so that the headship of Christ cannot really draw upon it in view of the service of God.

S.E.H. There are our neighbouring localities and that is certainly a very important side th side of fellowship meetings and helping' one another to get into the inheritance, but then there seemed to be a way in which Judah enfolds Simeon in the sense that Simeon is within the inheritance of Judah, that they take them on and embrace them in that sense.

J.A.G. I think in the light of Christianity the whole position is integrated. If I am local in Plainfield and you are not enjoying your inheritance I cannot enjoy my inheritance in you, because my inheritance is in you as well as that your inheritance is in me, for we are to enjoy the land together. "Whither the tribes go up" Ps 122: 4, that is a very beautiful mutual thought. We all love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption. We should set our selves to acquire the knowledge of the truth in its scope and vastness through the ministries of the recovery, every one of them, so that we know what the land is, we can give an outline of it, we know its borders, we know which way this runs and that runs. Somebody said, How did they come to the fact that the border of the inheritance is found in Colossians 3, the things above, for that is the border. You penetrate into that and you come into the wealth and substance of it.

Deuteronomy 8 brings out the wonderful fertility and character and productivity that belongs to it, all these features of Christ that are found amongst the brethren. One thing perhaps more than any other that has marked these men that have led in the recovery is that they have loved the truth but they certainly have loved the brethren.

A.S.H. Achsah says, "Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a southern land"; then she adds "give me also springs of water". Is that not a further thought? We are not settling down in what we have but we pursue as to something further, something greater.

J.A.G. I think so. I suppose every Christian would say that they love the brethren. But the thing is practical, it has to be expressed. So you need springs of water, it needs to be cultivated, for love is an active thing.

K.A.O. Paul refers to the house of Stephan as "that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the saints for service, that ye should also be subject to such, and to every one joined in the work and labouring", 1 Cor 16: 15,16. Would that be how it works out practically?

J.A.G. I think so. Stephanas and Fortunatus have filled up what was lacking on your part, he says (see v 17). That is a great thing.

Nothing should be lacking on anybody's part, but love is able to fill up what may be lacking. There was tremendous urge and love for Christ and for the brethren so that they were able to fill up what was lacking on the part of the Corinthians. I suppose the Corinthians were so concerned about their place in the meeting that the practical side of Christianity was being missed out. They were not even too concerned about dealing with evil, which was a terribly low state. But the thing here is to say to your brother, "Come up with me". Can we all say that to one another? What holy, mutual, blessed relations there would be in the local meeting – "Come up with me".

A.S.H. Scripture speaks of brethren dwelling together in unity.

J.A.G. That is the ultimate I suppose: "there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore", Ps 133: 3. Brethren together in unity on the level of that Psalm in the Songs of the ascent are in the enjoyment of the blessing. You can hardly find words to describe it.

R.N.H. Would you say something about glorifying God. The Lord in John 17 says, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (v 3). Then He proceeds to say "I have glorified thee on the earth".

Paul says, "glorify now then God in your body", 1 Cor 6: 20. I was thinking of the matter of eternal life and the practical energy that is needed for bringing one another into the area of the inheritance.

Peter and John went up together into the temple, and the Lord was referred to yesterday, how He expended Himself in relation to recovery. This would be the practical working out of what is mutual.

J.A.G. The gospel secures your body, secures it member by member. In Romans 6 you yield your members instruments of righteousness so that your whole body is a living sacrifice. Now that is a settled thing, you are standing related to the will of God, so consequently the brethren are bound to be together. It is like Luke 24, there is the honeycomb, the local meeting is that. There is

sovereignty in it – Judah is first – yet there is the idea of the honeycomb and the Lord appropriates both.

R.N.H. You referred to getting to meetings: some of these practical things involve sacrifice and energy. Sometimes we feel we are not up to certain things physically, but the Lord Jesus would leave us a model, as to how He expended His energy and His interest in souls.

J.A.G. The Lord does not expect more of you physically than you are able for. The main thing is the moral thing worked out in the brethren. When you are under His direction you move in a wise and comely way. You have to look after your body, you have to care for your health, God has given it to you. Yet love would seek to do the very most that it can, and sacrifice is the order of the day.

G.D.P. Ananias said to Saul, "Saul, brother," Acts 9: 17. He did not put Saul below him in any way, did he?

J.A.G. I think that is beautiful. "Saul, brother" he says, "the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way". There is the diffusion of the spirit of the new covenant; it is the breath of Christ really coming out in Ananias, and Saul was bound to respond to it. The breath that Christ breathed into them must involve the spirit and character of the new covenant and the spirit and character of reconciliation because they would be looking for something that they can remit.

E.F.C. Would that go along with the thought of the fear of Jehovah that we have in Malachi 3 as characterising the company that seemed instinctively to gather together and speak often of these things with one another?

J.A.G. I think they were concerned about their links with God in the presence of the awfulness of verses 13, 14 and 15. They become more exclusive than ever, they shut out everything. "They that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another;" and then it says, "Jehovah observed it". There is something there that engages God's attention: "Jehovah observed it, and heard"; He was listening. It is a fine thing when God listens.

J.McK. I feel tested in these things. It is not how much I say but *what* I say. When you speak of Christ and of what relates to God Himself and the service of the Spirit there ought to be brevity and fulness in it. He that believes that Jesus is the Son of God has eternal life. How could we take that and try to make a great address out of it ; the pith of the thing is that what we say is affecting the brethren.

J.A.G. It is well to say that. I only once heard Mr Taylor speak and the pithiness of the way that he quoted a scripture affected me. That meant more than a thousand words. Paul has to say that to the Corinthians; he says, You can speak ten thousand words in a tongue but five words with the understanding convey all that is necessary (see 1 Cor 14: 19).

J.A.P. I noticed this morning that in this passage you read in Malachi it finishes with "And ye shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not". This interchange in the community and atmosphere of life involves a moral side to it. A brother is born for adversity and what we have had to learn is to accept help when it comes or to get help when it is needed so that the purity of this fellowship is maintained. It runs with this great matter of brotherly love. Othniel overcame certain moral matters and in that way he succeeded to acquire that inheritance. The moral side must be right with us to acquire the inheritance.

J.A.G. It has to be right with us to get the thing substantially in our souls. Now the fear of God is a tremendous matter and it develops this moral element so that we can make our way, and we can discern. I would think underlying that is our link with Christ and the appreciation of headship.

G.H. It says "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another", and in the Acts we read that "fear was upon every soul", chap 2: 43. The reference to the soul would mean that they were real[ly] affected inwardly as to this matter.

J.A.G. I think so, such was the power of Peter's preaching, such was the power that was amongst the brethren. What a time it must have been when they were all together in Solomon's porch, and of the rest durst no man join them (see Acts 5: 13). That is exclusiveness because the holiness of God, the divine nature, was there and judgment was there and whatever came up it was met according to God, and it was met in the spirit and power and character of the new covenant.

G.H. The thing was very real.

J.A.G. Yes, and they were all together.

T.E.D. It says here of Jehovah that "a book of remembrance was written before him". Do you think that we should have a book of remembrance in a certain sense? In Romans 16 Paul salutes the brethren showing how they were in his affections.

J.A.G. All these thoughts are extremely helpful because they build up in our souls appreciation of the brethren. I do not think you can value the brethren too much. How many persons could really say honestly out of their heart that they are less than the least of all the saints? But then he says, To me it has been given – that is, the ministry of the mystery (see Eph 3: 8).

A.S.H. Would Paul's feelings for Onesimus be connected with what we are saying? He speaks of "my bowels", bringing in the inwards.

J.A.G. That is all helpful on the line that we are seeking to look into. He is promoting the commonwealth in Philemon's house; "receive him", he says, "that is, my bowels... I would have profit of thee" , Philem 12, 20.

K.A.O. I wonder if 1 Corinthians 12 would enter into our inquiry as to the body. It says that God has tempered it together that there might be no division in it but that the members might have the same concern one for another (see vv 24, 25). Would that enter into what we are saying as to the working out of the truth, involving the tempering together including all the saints, even those parts of the body that do not have much significance?

J.A.G. I think that if the conditions are such as are set forth in Judges chapter 1, and we can have Othniel and Achsah, we have the fulness of Paul's ministry working practically in a place. Then he goes on to say, I will show you a way of more surpassing excellence.

G.H. What does "tempered the body together" convey to you?

J.A.G. I think God has fashioned us and he has made every member different but they all fit together, they take peculiar strain, one takes more than another. It is quite a thought, and I am unable really to convey to you in words how I feel about it, but God has done that.

C.F.D. It makes the whole thing workable. It is a metallurgical expression, for if it is not heat-treated, if it is not tempered, it is not workable. You get all the grains fitting together properly, you get the adhesion, and Paul applies that to the body of the saints. It becomes workable if we are fitted together this way.

J.A.G. So that there is no breakdown whatsoever in the body.

S.E.H. Would you say practically that tempering may work out, for example, locally when an exercise comes up and the assembly conscience is reached as to a matter? There may be the side of suffering together in the exercise through the loss of someone, or the joy of recovery of someone, but does it involve the tempering process?

J.A.G. I think so. You may have felt at breaking point, that something is going to go, but then it does not go. God has tempered the body together.

K.A.O. What marked Nehemiah was skill in being able to rally the people together. I wonder if that is not involved in the tempering, that you bring Christ before the brethren in such an attractive way that they rally around Him and are influenced in relation to the building of the wall.

J.A.G. We should therefore be able, as knowing all our brethren locally, to know exactly how they will react, what they will do, and they should know that about me. Mr Taylor said that he had a

judgment of everybody locally and of everybody he met, and if they do not have a judgment of me that is their fault.

K.A.O. We should add that he said 'not a critical judgment'.

J.A.G. That is right, you have an assessment of the brethren. Unless you have that you cannot consider one another. You have to consider one another for love and good works and see what you can do to help a brother or a sister on.

J.McK. There is a word in Ephesians 4: "fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part" (v 16). We should not try to go out of our measure, but the Spirit is working inwardly until the fulness of the body is building itself up in love.

J.A.G. I think it is good to speak about that. You do not have to be anybody else but yourself.

J.McK. I was thinking about your reference earlier to your father and to the brother; this is where the link is formed by the Spirit in answer to what Christ is as head of the body.

J.A.G. Exactly, and that will never break down, it remains eternally.

J.R.C. Amidst all the pressure that was upon the Lord in Luke 22, and what the disciples were engaged with as to which of them should be the greatest, He says, "Ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations" (v 28). What a valuation He had of these men!

J.A.G. I think that is very beautiful, and we need to get that kind of valuation about the brethren, because who can say the secret exercises that persons are going through alone with God that nobody will ever know about. That inheritance needs to be cultivated.

K.A.O. It says of the Lord Jesus in Luke 24, where the two were going to Emmaus, "and he made as though he would go farther". I wondered if it shows the skill of the Lord; He knew how far to go with them and He secured them for Himself. We need to be skilful as to how we deal with one another and know each other in an intimate

way in affection so that we would know how far to go in relation to what is needed to turn persons back to the saints.

J.A.G. I think it brings up a very whole some matter. I received help on it from Mr Stoney. They had a great time going to Emmaus, the ministry was wonderful, their hearts burned within them on the way, but they were still going away from the centre. It was when the Lord made Himself known, for if the Lord does not come into it and make Himself known we may enjoy a fine setting out of everything and we are thrilled with the ability, but when the Lord comes into it we are ready to return. They might have said it was too late, it was night, but there is nothing said about that; when the Lord makes Himself known it is no longer too late, it is not that the day is declining, they go right back to Jerusalem.

K.A.K. The Lord was making Himself known to His disciples at the beginning of John's gospel, and the evidence of that working in the commonwealth is seen in the way that Philip goes and finds Nathanael. He says, "Come and see" (John 1: 46) and it was then that Nathanael realised what had taken place.

J.A.G. I think so. I thought about reading that yesterday, because I think there was the working out and the promoting of links that would be equal to the commonwealth as between Peter, Andrew and Nathanael, a very beautiful setting because somebody has been able to communicate, not so much what the Lord has done but who He is. "Behold the Lamb of God", John said, for he was thinking about that. There is "the odour of his knowledge... in every place", 2 Cor 2: 14.

A TRUE ISRAELITE AND A TRUE JEW

Milos Pavlic

John 1: 47; Romans 2: 28,29

In these two scriptures, beloved brethren we find the thought of an Israelite and of true Jew. I think it is interesting that in both scriptures we have allusions to the meaning of the proper names.

My impression is that when the Lord spoke about there being no guile He alluded to the name of Jacob, for the name Jacob means a supplanter or deceiver. So my impression would be that the Lord wished to convey that Nathanael is an Israelite in whom there is no feature of Jacob. On the other hand, in Romans, the name of Jew, or Judah, means praise. So there is an allusion to praise.

I thought to say a few words about these two points – about the true Israelite in whom there is no guile, or no feature of Jacob, and about a true Jew. I think it is a wonderful title, the true Israelite; it is a man of the purpose of God. There is a very great and important difference between the meaning of the words Jacob and Israel.

Jacob is what he was naturally, and Israel is what he was as a subject of the purpose of God. What was Jacob? Who was Jacob? I think Jacob was a mixture. We see in him wonderful features of the work of God, but on the other hand it is all mixed, all that he was as a natural man. He was seeking blessing, but he was seeking it by false means; he was interested in the things of God, but his whole style of life was in very great contradiction to it. On the one hand he was interested in what was of God; on the other hand his ways did not correspond with it. That is what we are naturally. I think we can say Jacob was born again; he was seeing the house of God, and the Lord says, Who is not born anew cannot see the kingdom of God (see John 3: 3). I think the house of God is a higher thought, a more advanced thought, than the kingdom. Jacob saw the house of God, but at the same time he said, How terrible is this place. Seeing the house of God and not being in concert with it, he had no pleasure in it; on the contrary he found it a terrible place. Does it not correspond

with what we are as people in flesh and blood? It was a mixture, a very sad mixture, and his ways were full of deceiving his brother.

Truly his name was Jacob, his brother said, because he has deceived me twice (see Gen 27: 36) – a very sad testimony.

But then, what he was as Israel – a prince of God! There is an interesting comparison between the two instances when Jacob was in the house of God. In chapter 28 of Genesis he said, "How dreadful is this place!". The house of God is here but it is terrible, no joy in it. But in the second instance he came back as Israel ; he was named Israel by God. Then the word of God for him was, "Go up to Bethel, and dwell there" (Gen 35: 1) – or live there – and then he finds pleasure in it. Then "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had talked with him, a pillar of stone, and poured upon it a drink-offering" (v 14). The drink-offering speaks about joy, it was an offering of wine – quite another attitude to the house of God, for he was Israel, prince of God – a worshipping feature in the man who is the subject of God's grace.

Well, that is what the Lord Jesus saw: "truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile"; that is, there was no feature of Jacob; he was a man given to God, a man finding his pleasure in the things of God. That is what we are according to God's purpose, but the point is to correspond to it. The Lord saw it in Nathanael. Of course, fully and absolutely it is only in Him. He is the true Israel of God in Him there was never any feature of what belongs to Jacob. The humanity of Jesus is a blessed subject to think about, how His holy humanity was a figure of the meal offering, the pure, fine, white flour without any trace of something else brought in – a holy, pure, wonderful Person. Those are the features the Holy Spirit is intending to bring about in us. The Lord is seeking to do that; I think it would correspond with what we have in Ephesians as to the assembly, not to have any spot or wrinkle or anything like that. That is what the Lord is bringing about in us. Dear brother, dear sister, How far do we correspond with it? How far are these holy features prevailing in us? Or in our heart do we manifest still the features of Jacob? Born again, yes, it was very good so far, but it is the grace of God, nothing

of us. But do we correspond to it in our ways? Do we seek what is for God, finding our pleasure, our joy, in the house of God? Are we dwelling in the house of God? I think that the words of God to Jacob are very testing: "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there". Are we dwelling in the house of God or are we just visitors? We have to dwell there, for in Ephesians it says we are members of God's household. The house of God is our home. Do we feel it so? Do we find our joy in it, in what is of God, in His own household? That is a true Israelite. The Lord clothes Nathanael with these thoughts.

But I think it is very good for us to clothe the saints with such thoughts, not to see only the features of Jacob, the old deceiver, the natural man, but to see in them what corresponds to the true Israelite.

To return to Genesis 28, where we were speaking about Jacob not finding pleasure in the house of God, I think that in what follows at the end of this chapter (John 1) the Lord alludes to the same vision of Jacob when He says, "Verily, verily, I say to you, Henceforth ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man" (v 51). But it was wonderful how God spoke to Jacob. It was just Jacob in all the features of the natural man, but I am sure God was looking through him to Israel in bringing before him the promises, and through Israel He was looking through to the true Israel, to the Lord Jesus Himself. Angels of God were ascending and descending upon Jacob, but it was a wonderful figure of what the Lord presents here, the angels of God coming into service on Him who is indeed the perfect true Israel of God, the wonderful Son of man. All the ideals of God are fully realised, fully manifested. What a subject for the heart of God, and what a subject for our hearts! That is a true Israelite.

A little different thought is presented to us in the expression 'the true Jew'. The Jew speaks to me about the thought of a remnant.

We know the history of the division of the kingdom and there was the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah, and in Judah there was a remnant. The temple of God was there; it was abandoned by Israel but remained in Judah. There was a true priesthood according

to the word of God, and we read in the first book of Chronicles that many left Israel whose heart was directed to follow God; they left the kingdom of Jeroboam and came back to Jerusalem to be among those who were remaining true to the principles of God, the true temple, the true priesthood, the true offerings; in spite of their failures there was something of what was of God. So the notion of a Jew would speak about a remnant, and that is something that would speak to us, for in this time of the ruin and failure of Christendom God is securing a remnant for Himself.

But now here is a great difference; there are two sides or two views of a Jew, an outward one and an inward one, a seeming one and a real one, and I think it is searching our hearts, beloved brethren. Perhaps we claim to be a remnant, but the question is, Is it an outward one or an inward one? I would connect these two views of a true Jew, or an untrue or a false Jew, with what we find in Revelation about Philadelphia and Laodicea. In Laodicea we have an outward Jew, confessing outwardly a great truth, the wonderful truth of God's assembly, and being rich in it. It is like Paul says in Romans 2: "But if thou art named a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast in God, and knowest the will, and discerningly approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and hast confidence that thou thyself art a leader of the blind, a light of those who are in darkness. an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and of truth in the law; thou then that teachest an other, dost thou not teach thyself? thou that preachest not to steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest man should not commit adultery, dost thou com mit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols dost thou commit sacrilege? thou who boastest in law" (vv 17 -23), and so on. Is it not like Laodicea? I am rich and need nothing, need nobody. But what follows? "Thou then that teachest an other, dost thou not teach thyself? thou that preachest not to steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?, thou that boastest in law, dost thou by transgression of the law dishonour God?" – "rich, and am

grown rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou are the wretched and the miserable and poor, and blind, and naked", Rev 3: 17. Beloved brethren, it is a very real danger with us, to confess that we have all that and not to correspond to it inwardly.

That is a false Jew. They perhaps have praise (for Judah means praise), praise from men but not from God.

But then the true Jew – how wonderful that is! That is like Philadelphia: "and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev 3: 8) – faithful inwardly: what is inward, what is moral, the wonderful features of what corresponds to the true Israelite in the midst of the ruin, in the midst of the failure, in the midst of all the bad things of the world today; how wonderful it is to be reckoned among such! We have it in Colossians. I very much like this description of the true Jew; it does not exactly say so, but it corresponds to it. It says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye. And to all these add love which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful", Col 3: 12-15. Those are the features of the true Jew, inwardly, whose praise is of God. That is what is agreeable to God; not boasting in known truth, valuable as it is to know it, but knowledge is not all – perhaps it is much, but it is not all. But here are features of the true Jew, of such the praise is of God. Are we all such? I was very much impressed many years ago by the words of Mr Raven as I read his comments about this passage in Colossians; he said, There is a circle of such who correspond to it who are such as we have read about, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, forgiving one another", and so on. Then Mr Raven was asked, Where shall I find such a circle? And he answered, In Scripture. It is a great thing to find it in Scripture, but how shall I get into that circle to be like that myself?

When I am like that then I belong to that wonderful circle of such who are characterised by the features of the true inward Jew, of the true remnant of God, not belonging to that or that outward circle but to that inward circle characterised by these wonderful features. May we be such, beloved brethren, for His name's sake and for the joy and pleasure of His heart.

MAIDSTONE

7 April 1990

(Revised but not by Mr Pavlic)

CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

Even though you may have 'broken up' you are still in God's school as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's epistle to Titus, his 'own child', tells us that "the grace of God" which brings with it salvation also teaches us important lessons. One of these is to live "soberly" which means to act as true Christians. Then living "justly" is towards other people, and living "piously" relates to how we think of God's rights over us, of praise and thanksgiving.

The word "schoolmaster" is used in older Bibles for the law given through Moses. This includes the Ten Commandments, and its value is that it teaches a knowledge of God who gave it. But when He "sent forth his Son " He was more fully revealed as Father. Then He has "sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" so that we are able to do things which are pleasing to Him freely and not just as law. The parables taught by Jesus were based on familiar objects and simple happenings of everyday life. In this way He taught heavenly lessons from earthly objects. Count up the various trees, flowers, animals, fish, insects and other things – all created by Him – and you will be surprised at the number and variety of subjects for His lessons.

Perhaps the matter of examinations is not a pleasant one to you. However, Paul wrote to some believers that "He that examines me is the Lord". In a way that was going on all the time, but the apostle had in mind especially the moment when "the Lord shall come". "Then shall each have his praise from God." So do you look forward to that day?

J.C.Evershed