

FOREWORD TO THE LIVING FAITH SERIES

The origin of the Living Faith Series has a certain element of interest. A group of pastors, teachers and lay-leaders asked for teaching in the form of Masters' Classes. A Master's Class is that given by a Master in an art or other discipline to those who are themselves Masters, but wish to learn from older or more mature teachers.

The first in the series, *The Nature and Meaning of Love*, was formulated as a set of short notes to be given on a certain day. By the day it was to be given others had enquired and asked permission to share in the Class. In five years fifty of these studies were given, the fruits of which are the five volumes printed in this present format. The titles are appended to each volume. The Index or Table of Contents prefaces each volume.

Value of the Studies

The studies have been prepared for seriously-minded persons, those who wish to study Biblical themes. Primarily they are for those who wish to extend their knowledge of the themes treated. Secondly they are for use in group studies, or as the basis for an expanded series under the same title. In fact many churches, fellowships and groups have used them in these ways.

The materials contained in the studies have been ferreted out from the Scriptures with the usual aids of concordance, Bible Dictionaries and encyclopaedia. In some cases other bibliography has been used. The general Bibliography of resources is given below in this Foreword.

Some such resources are very light on required materials for developing a theme. The writer has researched some of these themes over many years and so has added his own thought to those of accepted authorities. Basically, of course, the Scriptures are the general foundation for all themes. Because dictionaries and encyclopaedia are not always sufficient the research of students is sometimes hampered. Such students have to travel to libraries and resource centres. Many just do not have the time. The writer then has sought to provide gathered material for preachers, teachers and leaders, from which they may draw, and on which they may care to build.

No claim is made that the studies are the fullest coverage available. In some cases there is need for supplementing them. Few, however, have complained about shortage of the material. It must be noted nevertheless that the studies concentrate primarily on the Biblical materials available. There is little attempt to relate them to current situations as other Resource Materials seek to do. It is recognised that this application is most valuable to help the reader in his thinking, especially as he wishes to see the relevancy of the Scriptures to current times. Nevertheless the present writer has chosen to restrict himself on this score, trusting that to some degree the reader may

come to his own conclusions, even if it takes him/her time to work through to them.

The Bible and the Living Faith Series

It will be clear to students and scholars of theology that the writer is scarcely interested, at least for the purposes of these studies, in the matter of textual questions. The text is taken as presented and available without the underlying problems which present themselves to textual critics. The avoidance of these problems may seem to be a cavalier treatment of the labours of critics. This is not intended. It is just that the substance of the Scriptures is required to be known. The writer sees the Scriptures as a natural, integrated, functional whole, despite (or perhaps because of) the time-span in which they were composed.

The Matter of the Studies

Finally the author of these studies makes no great claim for them. That they are deficient in material, treatment and the like he does not doubt. Some may find theological flaws, and even seeming errors. This will be so where readers differ with the writer's basic presuppositions. No matter! Something has been done. The spade has turned over a little soil. Some light (to change the figure) may have been shed on many a subject. No two persons entirely agree on the one treatment. It does not matter provided both are sincere in their attempts to expound and preserve the truth.

Repetition of Material

Each study is designed, so far as is possible, to be a complete treatment in itself. This means that certain material will be repeated from study to study. Since each study is available singly (as well as in this volume form) this repetition cannot be avoided. In fact the reader is helped as he does not have to be referred to other studies, thus breaking the continuity of the material before him.

The Studies and Their Thrust

The writer is frankly an evangelical, and of the conservative theological school. This does not mean he does not appreciate other viewpoints than that of his own. Theology must have recourse to comparative resources. Hence the difficulty in these studies of a reader pinpointing the view, often, of the writer. Paul has told us, 'All things are yours.' He says some limit themselves to Paul, or Apollos or Cephas, thus turning a good viewpoint into a sectarian principle and practice. Paul, Peter and Apollos all belong to all God's people. God's people, likewise, belong to them all. Also we are Christ's and Christ is God's. There is a wide range of good Biblical theology and we ought to appreciate those who differ from us, as also those who do not. Excepting heresy we ought to gain from the insights of all.

Beyond the Five Volumes

The fifty studies contained in this series will be complemented by further studies although they will not be issued in this format. Rather they will be published as books, or separate publications in a study format.

Enquiries should be made to the publisher, New Creation Publications Inc. P.O. Box 403 Blackwood 5051 Adelaide South Australia.

General Bibliography

A Dictionary of Christian Theology, Ed. A. Richardson, SCM, London, 1969.

A Theological Word Book of the Bible, Ed. A. Richardson, Macmillan Co., NY, 1971.

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Dictionary of the Bible, (1 Vol.), Ed. J. Hastings, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1963.

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International Standard Bible Bncyclopaedia, Gen. Ed. James Orr, Eerdmans,Michigan, 1978.

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