



Assembly Testimony



The Love of God

*The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell.
Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.
Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall for evermore endure
The saints' and angels' song*

F. M. Lehman.

A-MILLENNIALISM

By WM. BUNTING.

SATAN'S IMPRISONMENT

THE statement concerning Satan's confinement in Rev. 20. 2, 3, though clear, lucid, and unequivocal, is also, it seems to us, entirely misrepresented by A-Millennialists. These folks certainly see through strangely coloured lenses. Or is it that they wilfully close their eyes to the plain meaning of words? They declare that this statement signifies only that Satan's activities are curtailed during the present age of grace. The Apostle states definitely, however, that he "saw" the arch-foe "laid hold on", "bound", "cast into the abyss", "shut up", with a "seal" upon him; that "he should deceive the nations no more", for the thousand years. We beg to say that we are simple enough to believe that John's ocular perception was clear enough to behold the vision, and that in interpreting what he "saw", he means exactly what he says. In our interpreting the passage, we do not at all "mingle the symbolic and the literal at our own mere whim," as our opponents would accuse us of doing.

The imprisonment of Satan is exactly what one would expect to find here. The events of chapters 19 and 20 are orderly and consecutive. At the close of chapter 19, the Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire. There is nothing to indicate that this ends the world. It is but a step preparatory to the establishing of Christ's Kingdom. Satan himself, however, who is the great instigator of all the world's evil, must be put out of the way. This the angel does in chapter 20, by casting him to "the abyss" (R.V.). "The abyss" is not figurative language. It is the term used of a definite abode, quite distinct from "the lake of fire", to which Satan's two henchmen were cast. The word occurs some nine times in the New Testament (Luke 8. 31; Romans 10. 7; Rev. 9. 1, 2, 11; 11. 7; 17. 8; 20. 1, 3), In most passages it signifies the abode of demons, though Romans 10. 7 uses it in a more general sense, and seems to identify it with what Scripture calls "hell". A-Millennialists hold that this binding of Satan took place at Calvary. It is true that "bind" is the very word used in the clause, "except he first bind the strong man" (Matt. 12. 29), which clearly refers to the work of the

cross. The binding, says one writer, "was a relative thing, that is, it did not mean that Jesus has absolutely shut up Satan from all activity . . . Satan still exercises much influence . . ." With this, of course, we concur. The writer further refers to Heb. 2. 14, 15, where Satan is said to have been "destroyed." "He is destroyed," says the author, "by the victory of Calvary, but this does not mean that Satan exists no more. He is destroyed in the sense that his power to hurt those whom Christ would save is taken away" ("The Momentous Event", by W. J. Grier, p. 85). With this also we are in hearty agreement. The binding of Satan in Rev. 20, however, is not "a relative thing". IT IS ABSOLUTE. Satan is here shut up from *all* activity. No longer does he exercise any influence over man. Let this be carefully noted, for it is an essential point. John is most definite and explicit regarding it, and piles up several clauses one upon the other, in his endeavour to express the completeness of Satan's confinement. This is no partial binding. Satan to-day is powerless "to hurt those whom Christ would save", in the sense that he cannot touch their eternal security, though many a promising Christian career he has blasted; but in that day he will be powerless to hurt "the nations". Mark the difference. Far from Satan's activities to deceive the nations now being curtailed, this is the most demonized age there ever has been. Even those whom the Lord has saved must take unto themselves "the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6. 12, 13), if they are to be preserved from his foul assaults. How ridiculously preposterous it is therefore to suggest that Satan is now bound in the abyss! Why, "as a roaring lion (he) walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5. 8). In those very parts of the world which have been most transformed by the gracious influence of the Gospel, he has, in one way or other, continued his sinister work; and as the end approaches, that work assumes more subtle and delusive forms, and is executed with an increasing intensity of hatred. If he is able to attack the Person of our blessed Lord by the wicked God-dishonouring doctrines of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Communism, Mohammedanism and Romanism, etc., and able to instigate mass hatred, terror, rape, vice and murder, while still bound in his prison, then indeed, as has been pithily remarked, he must be tied by a very long chain. During the thousand years, however, he will be under lock and key, as the use of the word, "key", in Rev. 20 clearly implies. If he is presently under this solitary confinement, how can we account for the world's evils? Who, pray, is acting as Satan's lieutenant?

*"Won't somebody step to the front forthwith,
 And make his bow, and show
 How the frauds and crimes of a single day spring up!
 We want to know!
 The devil is fairly voted out, and, of course, the devil's gone;
 But simple folk would like to know who carries his business on."*

(Alf. J. Hough).

There is one other question which I should like to ask our A-Millennial friends. If we are at liberty to tone down the strong terms used of Satan's imprisonment in "the abyss", in verses 2 and 3, are we not also at liberty to tone down the statement of v. 10 concerning his being eternally "tormented . . . in the lake of fire"? Why should we understand the one statement in a symbolic sense, and not understand the other, which is in the immediate context, in an exactly identical manner? And why may we not likewise soften the meaning of verse 15 and of chapter 21. 8, which describes the doom of sinners in the same lake of fire? Must we not be consistent? It would be a gross outrage upon the sacred language of Scripture to dare to do such a thing. So we believe it surely must be, to weaken or tone down the earlier verses of chapter 20, which we have been considering. It is high time for evangelical A-Millennialists to awaken to the inconsistencies, the serious implications, and the dangers of their spiritualizing methods of interpretation.

There are other matters touching the future reign of our Lord, which we have not considered in these pages. It is hoped, however, that what has been written will in some measure help to a clearer understanding of a subject which should be dear to all our hearts. It is important that we should have sound views regarding Christ's eternal Sonship, His present Lordship and Headship, and it is equally important that we should also have correct views regarding His future glorious Kingship. For His advent, "Who is that blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of lords" we wait and pray.

*"Come, then, and added to Thy many crowns,
 Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
 Thou Who alone art worthy! It was Thine
 By ancient covenant, ere nature's birth,
 And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,
 And overpaid its value with Thy blood.
 Thy saints proclaim Thee King; and in their hearts
 Thy title is engraven with a pen
 Dipp'd in the fountain of eternal love."*

(To be concluded in next issue).

Brotherhood and Brotherliness

By DR. R. C. EDWARDS, Australia.

IN the issue of *The Witness* (London) for September, 1946, Question 2380 was answered by W. E. Vine as follows; "To use for ordinary purposes a Denominational title such as 'Christian Brethren' to describe the assemblies of believers who profess to adhere to the teachings of the Word of God, or to attach any name to them virtually represents them as one of the sects or organised communities of Christendom, is to contravene *one of the fundamental principles of Scripture* according to which these assemblies are formed. In cases where the Government of the country demands that for the purpose of certain negotiations some form of description should be used, the phrase, 'those who are known as "the Brethren"' satisfies the Government requirements, and at the same time does not commit the assemblies to the responsibility of themselves attaching such an appellation to their gatherings. *It is commonly known that they do not place themselves under any title which others may attach to them*".

About the same time W. E. V. wrote a pamphlet which he entitled, "*The Mistaken Term, 'The Brethren'*." Perhaps the reader has a copy of this which he is able to consult, or perhaps he can procure one, so that it will be sufficient here to make the following few extracts: "The appellation, The Brethren, is an utter misnomer. It is, or should be, repudiated by those who are so called. The appellation is false in more respects than one. It is contrary to the teaching of Scripture . . . No justification for any such denominational terminology . . . The very adherence of such assemblies to the teaching of the New Testament causes them (or should do so) to repudiate the imputation that they constitute a sect miscalled 'The Brethren' . . . Its use is dishonouring to the Spirit of God and a falsification of the actual position of any Scripturally formed assembly . . . The unfounded appellation, 'The Brethren' is a device of the spiritual foe whose aim has been thereby to prevent earnest believers from following the truth."

This pamphlet was re-printed both in the New Zealand publication known as *Wholesome Words* (Number 63) and in *The Australian Missionary Tidings* of June, 1961. It may be deemed of some significance that it was not mentioned by

the joint-authors of what appears to be the only "Life" of Mr. Vine so far to come off the press. Why does no mention of this pamphlet appear therein? And why is there no mention in it of W. E. V's booklet called *The Origin and Rise of Ecclesiasticism and the Papal System*? It is evident that neither of them satisfied the examiner. Why? The present writer begs to take the liberty of recommending both, especially to the young Christian student.

The deliberate, intelligent rejection of sectarian titles by Soltau in 1899, and by Vine in 1946, is typical of the attitude of worthy and accredited teachers since 1825. The reaction from it is a mark of decadence, inferiority, despair, and defeatism.

At this point will the reader allow his attention to be directed to a very significant passage of Scripture namely, Eph. 4. 11, 12 reading, in our A.V.: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ". An examination of the passage in its context shows that New Testament pastors and teachers constitute God's provision for the full adjustment of Christians to enable them to function faithfully in service and in building up the body of Christ. The adjustment of the Lord's people is to be recognised as a very important matter. Attention to some of the details of the language will repay the worshipful reader.

In verse 12, the sequence, "for . . . for . . . for . . ." is not accurate. Our R.V. corrects it to, "for — unto — unto". The first "for" of our A.V. is the translation of a certain Greek preposition, but the second and third "for" each represents a different one. Hence it is to be realised that the purpose of the gifts of pastor and teacher is one, not three. This one is the perfecting of the saints, meaning their full adjustment. A word is used here whose root meaning of adjustment is strengthened by having a prefix attached to it. The word signifying adjustment without the prefix is used, translated variously in our English language, about 15 times in the New Testament. It tells of the *mending* of nets in Matt. 4. 21 and Mark 1. 19; *perfection* in Luke 6. 40; 1 Cor. 1. 10; 2 Cor. 13. 11; 1 Thess 3. 10; Hebrews 13. 21; 1 Peter 5. 10; fitted in Romans 9. 22; *restore* in Gal. 6. 1; *prepared* in Heb. 10. 5; and *framed* in Heb. 11. 3. It is helpful to examine these references with the thought of adjustment before the mind in each instance.

The expression, "the work of the ministry", is misleading; "work of ministry" would be better, for there is nothing in the original representing "the". The term, "the ministry" is also misleading, making the reader think of the "Clerical office", an idea which of course is foreign to the New Testament; so that the thought may be better expressed by such a phrase as, "for work of service", or "for serving work". ("Putting me into the ministry" of 1 Tim. 1. 12 is similarly misleading; "the" is not in it; "putting me to service" might give the better sense).

Using the foregoing remarks to help in getting the sense, let us get back to verses 11 and 12. The meaning then is that the pastors and teachers of verse 11 are provided to bring about the full adjustment of the saints, in order that each believer may worthily engage in service and take his or her part in the building up of the body of Christ.

The mention of pastors and teachers brings to mind two activities which are very closely related, so closely, indeed, that we may speak of pastor-teachers, or, as K. S. Wuest puts it, pastors who are also teachers. But it is to be noticed that the pastoral side is mentioned before the teaching; the latter is ancillary to the former. The pastoral activity is the main thing; the teaching is in the interests of the shepherding.

The New Testament represents shepherding as the work of overseers, or bishops, or elders, in a local church, as in Acts 20. 28. The correct wording is, "in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers", not, "over which". The shepherding is done by those who are themselves in the local church (assembly), the little flock; they are part of it. The flock needs food, it needs to be kept together, to be guided in right paths by those who themselves walk in such paths, it needs to be guarded from dangers. All this is in the work of adjustment with which the term "perfecting" in verse 12 has to do.

The question may be asked, are the saints adjusted by being put into sects? Are gifted men acting in accordance with the mind of God in scattering believers among denominations? Is a gifted brother acting in a brotherly way when he seeks an arena for his oratory? Let no one say that the pastor-teachers are God's gift to the whole church; this is not stated nor is it implied; "gifts unto men" is right, and, as we see, for the full adjustment of the saints.

(To be continued).

EARLY EXPERIENCES IN GOSPEL WORK
RELATED BY THE LATE THOMAS CAMPBELL

in Windsor Hall Annual Missionary Meeting, Belfast,
on January 4, 1964.

MR. WRIGHT and I had many happy days together. Indeed, we had happy years together. We enjoyed unbroken fellowship in Gospel work for fifteen years. Here and there, all over Ulster, we preached together, and at the end of that time were able to say to the glory of God, that never once did we pitch our tent and conduct meetings without seeing souls saved. Of course, we also preached in Gospel halls and in barns and always with blessing. It was a cause for rejoicing that God led us from place to place. I believe we were as clearly led of God in our movements through the country as Israel was guided in the wilderness by the cloudy pillar and the fire.

I will give you just a few details of the first assembly that we had the joy and honour of planting. We heard about a district outside of Fivemiletown, here within the memory of the people of that day there had never been an evangelistic meeting. We thought that it would be a good place for a Gospel effort, and so we went along to view the land. From a hill-top we could see the many dwellings that were in the district. Within an easy distance from where we stood we also saw a field, just at the road side, which would be splendid as a site for our tent. We enquired whose field it was, and then visited the farmer and asked if he would favour us by granting us a site. "No, no," he said, "I'm sorry I could not, because I have that field reserved for cattle, and I could not at all let you have it". We suggested that we could easily fence off the tent, but it was clear he just did not want to let us have it. As we talked a man came into the yard—a contractor, whom the farmer had engaged to do some work for him. When he saw us, he exclaimed, "Hello, gentlemen, is this the part you are in now?" He had attended our meetings in another district, and his wife had been saved at them. "Well, yes, but our friend here, Mr. McCrory, says we cannot have his field in which to erect our tent". "Have you no field suitable, Mr. McCrory?" he enquired. "I have only the one field suitable", said the farmer, "and I am reserving it for my cattle". "Listen", went on the contractor, "I know these men, and I know the work they are doing. Let them have the field and if you do you will never regret it".

Mr. McCrory bent his head in thought for a moment and then said, "All right, all right, you can have it", and he granted it in spite of himself. Well, we soon had the tent erected on his land, in case he might change his mind and had posters put up all along the road, announcing that meetings would commence on the next Lord's Day. On the Lord's Day a farmer and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. McAlpine by name, were on their way home from the local Presbyterian Church, when her eye fell upon the tent. "What is that in McCrory's field?" she asked her husband. "Oh", said he, "that is a Gospel tent, and I hear that there are to be meetings in it". "That is good", said Mrs. McAlpine, "will you go down this afternoon to hear them?" "Well," replied he, "we won't rush things. There will be time enough yet". "Oh", she retorted, "we must go this day to hear them", and accordingly both came to the opening meeting that afternoon. Now, these two were to play an important part in the foundation of an assembly in that district. Mrs. McAlpine, who was the sister of a Presbyterian clergyman, was a true Christian, and took a keen interest in our meetings. Our work there continued right into the month of October. Then, as we wished to attend the annual Lurgan Bible Readings, we announced that for two nights there would not be any meetings. As Mrs. McAlpine went out of the tent that night she said to Mr. Wright and me: "I want to ask you a question. Where do you men go on Sundays?" "Well", I replied, "that is a big subject", but when we come back we shall have a long talk about it. I then gave her two little books to read. They were "Baptism" and "What Church should I join?" both by John Ritchie. "Now," I said, "read these and compare what you read with Scripture, until we return. Then let us know what you think of them." When we came back, what do you think? Dear Mr. and Mrs. McAlpine were just longing for baptism. So we had the joy of baptizing them in a river in one of their own fields. But then the question arose, "What Church should we join?" Mrs. McAlpine—for she was the leader in the thing, as sometimes the women are—said to us: "That little book speaks of churches being in houses". "Yes", I replied, "there were churches in the houses in early days, and the church of which God's Word speaks can be in any house". "And", she asked, "could you start a church in our house?" "Certainly", we said. Then they both spoke out saying, "Well, there is our house for you". We did not hurry, however. A large number of people had by this time professed to be saved at our meetings. So we talked to them about these

things, and many of them were anxious to obey the Word of God. After a time therefore we announced that a breaking of bread meeting would in future be held each Lord's Day morning in Mr. McAlpine's home. And do you know, we started that assembly with about forty people in fellowship, and the large room used to be so crowded that some of the Christians had to sit out in the hall of the house. The assembly went on well, meeting in that home, until Mr. & Mrs. McAlpine had gone to be with the Lord. To make a long story short, that assembly now meets in the Gospel Hall in the townland of Lungs, and I am sure you have often heard of the Lungs Assembly, near Fivemiletown, that was the first assembly which dear Mr. Wright and I had the joy of seeing planted.

CHANGE AND DECAY

By Robert McClurkin

WE live in a world of change. Politically, socially and morally the world is changing. The spirit of Nationalism raises its head on every continent, resulting in dictatorial regimes, more cruel than the Colonial powers they displace. Morally the standards are lower than ever. Society is rotting at the core. Sin is not only condoned but endorsed. Every rule of decency is broken with shameless pride. The result is that chaos and disaster prevail on a universal scale. Leaders and statesmen are staggered as they see no way to stop the incoming tide of lawlessness which tends to overthrow the accepted standards of justice and decency.

It is a cause for alarm that this spirit of change, and to change, is insidiously creeping into the assemblies of the Lord's people. Ethical standards are lower than ever. That spiritual sensitiveness that recoils from everything that is low and mean and unjust is rare. The standard of appraisal is perverted by external criterions that fail to recognize the spiritual worth and godly character of saints.

To the spiritual and observant mind it is obvious that many of the changes taking place among us neither add to the dignity nor the unity of the testimonies that meet simply in the Lord's Name.

The principles of the New Testament assembly can only function properly when characterized by spirituality and simplicity. As spirituality wanes, godly simplicity is displaced by fleshly innovations which religiously entertain and appeal to the carnal mind. Godly and exercised saints wonder where it will all end.

Enforcing many of these changes has not only caused friction and confusion among the saints but some of them infringe on divine principles and lead to the obliteration of those features that distinguish the New Testament Church.

Let us think of some of these for the consideration and prayers of God's people. Think of the truth of Administration that God has entrusted to godly, matured and scripturally qualified overseers. In many places this has been displaced by the business meeting where every babe or novice has an equal voice. The spiritual judgment of godly, experienced shepherds is set aside for a system of voting that appeals to the worldly and untaught. When we examine the New Testament we learn that temporal problems as well as spiritual were put into the hands of matured and qualified men who had the confidence of the saints. We know of course that some men have used the truth of oversight to gain power and impose an unscriptural dictatorship on the saints. But two wrongs never make a right. Whether it be oversight or deaconship, godliness and maturity are demanded by the Word of God and the saints are to acknowledge what the Holy Ghost has appointed. Then, consider the matter of Spiritual Gift. Distinguished gift that may take on an itinerant nature is given, not to do the work of the saints, but to equip them to do their own work (Eph. 4. 11-12). Such men went forth to plant assemblies and to water them with periodic visits. Their aim was to establish the saints in the truth of God and foster the development of local gift; then leave them to function for the Glory of God. When such men went into an assembly to remain for a year or two as Paul and others did it was for the purpose of defending the saints against the inroads of false doctrine or to guide in the exercise of discipline or other serious matters. Not one of these men ever became Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher to an assembly to the stifling of exercise of local gift. The assemblies of the New Testament were planted and watered by itinerant preachers who moved on and allowed the faith of the saints to work.

When the spirit of pioneering disappears and the assemblies become stopping places for the tourist and professional preacher, many of them with lesser gift than that possessed by the local assemblies they use along the way, then a spirit of laziness settles down in some meetings resulting in a craze to encourage young men, preferably with a college degree to become a pastor. The excuse is that such is needed to do

the visiting in the neighbourhood that brethren working with their hands have no time to do. But it invariably ends up with the pastor becoming evangelist and teacher as well. This leads to the discouragement of all local exercise, it feeds the spirit of laziness and has often led to division and confusion among the saints.

Another dangerous change today is associated with a change of emphasis on the importance of the Lord's supper. For many years the Lord's supper was considered by the godly as the most important meeting of the saints. This emphasis was the secret of the preservation of assemblies from doctrinal error. At this meeting the physical circle was looked upon as the symbol of the Lord's presence in the midst of His gathered people and the Word of God was prominent both in the worship of the saints and in exhorting to practical Christian living.

Today the emphasis is changing. Many are content to see such a meeting rushed through without the Word of God being opened to make room for other meetings to follow.

This lighter emphasis on the Lord's supper is much in evidence at times by some who will absent themselves from the feast, yet turn up at the second meeting to listen to a sermon or teach a Sunday School class.

Another change that is not for the good of the work of God is found in the Sunday School or the young people's meetings. The old fashioned children's hymns that built up a body of truth in the souls of the young have given place to chorus singing. Many of these are as empty and light as a feather and many downright silly and childish. Religious entertainment is edging out the Word of God and prayer. Are the golden shields of truth being replaced by shields of brass? Better dim gold than the shining brass of change and decay.

The perfect balance of experience and energy that should blend to the glory of God has been almost destroyed by a separation of the old from the young. Both sides perhaps are to blame. The old for failure to encourage and train the young in the ways of God and the young for cultivating a rebellious and independent spirit against the old. The steady hand of experience should be on every meeting of the local assembly. Where this is not so, the tendency is to drift or fall apart.

We are not opposed to changes, provided they do not infringe on divine principles or destroy the dignity and reverence of the assembly. But we see nothing of God or of Christ in that ruthless determination to change everything and de-

stroy the old land marks of assembly life and testimony.

Our need today is not more machinery or a ceaseless change of methods. We need God. For our poverty we need the gold of the knowledge of God; for our nakedness we need the character of Christ, and for our ignorance we need the eye salve or the intelligence of the Holy Spirit (Rev. 3). Without Him there is vacuum and defeat. With Him we can go forward to victory. It is for us to make our choice. Will it be machinery or God, religious externalisms or Christ, fleshly energy or the power of the Spirit of God? God help us all to bring Him into our lives, our homes and our assemblies and go forward with Him to meet the hostility of all our foes. *(Assembly Annals).*

ANNA--A PROPHETESS

By John Hogg, Banbridge

Luke 2. 36

LUKE gives us, in the first two chapters of his Gospel, the names of seven persons associated with the first coming into the world of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of us have been refreshed and encouraged from time to time, as we received written or oral ministry on most of these persons. Strangely, we do not often have mention made of Anna, yet the Holy Spirit, through Luke, credits her with certain features that we might well desire should characterize us, who, professedly, wait for another coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, viz, His coming to the air to take His blood-bought people out of the world to be forever with Himself (see 1 Thess. 4. 16-17).

Anna was one of those who formed a godly remnant in a dark day. There was much cold religious formality seen in many whose hearts were far from the Lord. Some professed to be worshippers of God, but were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15. 8-9). Others, eager for "filthy lucre", were guilty of making the "house of prayer, a den of thieves" (Mark 11. 17). Worse still, there were those who could be so cruel, that they earned the rebuke of the Lord, "ye devour widows' houses" (Matt. 23. 14). How pleasant the contrast to all this, that God saw in a godly remnant those who were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1. 6).

The TRIALS of Anna are instructive. They were "such as are common to man" (1 Cor. 10. 13). A christian without trial in this world is a paradox. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you . . . But rejoice" (1 Peter 4. 12). Anna had suffered the trial of bereavement. What added to the sadness of this was that it was experienced while she was young. After just seven years the husband was taken from her side. Undeterred, she continued waiting for redemption in Israel. Those eightyfour years meant a long wait and patience, but they had an end. Cheer up, dear child of God in trial, "sinning and sighing and sorrow shall cease, Jesus is coming again!" Another trial can be heavy. It is that of old-age. Anna had this. Nevertheless, she appears before us as an actively-serving spiritual *young* lady of over 100 years of age! Like Moses, her "eye was not dim, nor" her "natural force abated" (Deut. 34. 7). We might well covet this characteristic of vigour in the things of the Lord, until He comes. Further, she probably suffered wrongfully. We have referred above to the character of some in her day, who devoured widows' houses. The Lord made special provision for the widow in Israel. "Ye shall not afflict any widow" (Ex. 22. 22). "The widow . . . within thy gates . . . shall eat and be satisfied" (Deut. 14. 29). Probably God saw her tears at times, as the result of unworthy treatment from others, but grace enabled her to continue unswervingly in her devotion to her God. In this, she was like the Lord. His grace can enable us to do likewise—"To grieve far more for others' sins than all the wrongs that we receive."

The TENACITY of Anna is encouraging. Like the psalmist, she could claim, in days of confusion, "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies" (Psa. 119. 31). God had a house at Jerusalem. He bore testimony to it, that "now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My Name may be there for ever" (Chron. 7. 16). Of Anna we read, "she departed not from the temple". The days were dark indeed, much confusion existed, Sadducees taught 'no resurrection', but despite all this, God had His priest there (Zacharias) and communion could be enjoyed with God by the godly, while waiting for Him that would redeem Israel. There Anna 'stuck'. There also, she worked, and "served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Can we not emulate her? God still has His house. "The church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1. 2) is spoken of as "the temple of God" in the same epistle (3. 16), and this is that which is called "the house of God" (1 Tim. 3. 15). The local assembly is the only place for the child of God

to be found, and to continue in, until the Lord be come. Alas some have left for various reasons, but all such are put to shame by the sterling example of this precious saint. "She departed not".

The TESTIMONY of Anna is inspiring. As a prophetess, we take it she was one who enjoyed access into the presence of God, and in the light of His presence learned His will and His purposes. Then she could come forth to proclaim. Thus we read she "spake of Him". She "gave thanks". How acceptable to God was this exercise at a time when there was so much to displease Him! This is a triumph of grace, and her name just means that! And cannot this grace produce in us thankfulness, at all times, and in all circumstances? Saved by grace, to enjoy "the exceeding riches of His grace" for ever, we are those from whom continual thanks can be expected, until Jesus comes, Meantime, we, too, can "speak of Him" in this day of His rejection by the world, but better far, when He comes for us, we shall *sing* of Him, Who redeemed us by His blood (Rev. 5. 9). We might well ask, what enabled Anna to succeed in this triumph of spiritual experience? We believe it was all of the grace of God, but we suggest it was closely linked with her associations. She was "a daughter of Phanuel". Phanuel is the N.T. name for Peniel of Genesis chapter 32. There Jacob testified "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved". Communion was his experience. So also Anna. She was "of the tribe of Aser". Asher was the 'happy' tribe, that increased in number through the wilderness journey; it prospered. So, likewise Anna. Communion still leads to happiness and true spiritual prosperity. How grateful we should be for the grace of God that brought us into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, and into association with His redeemed people in the assemblies of His saints. We thank God for those who commune with God, day and night. They help us much in the assemblies by increasing our happiness in the things of the Lord. Their service has contributed much to our spiritual prosperity. Thus, in simple ways, we are brought into possession of God's great resources for us in dark difficult days. In the assemblies of His saints we have a "goodly heritage" (Psalm 16. 6). May we value these highly, and love unfeignedly those who are found in them, with all who love God. May we have grace to continue to fill our place in these assemblies, so dear to God, in these days of departure, that when our blessed Lord comes, it shall be recorded to our praise, like Anna, they "departed not".

LOST SOULS

LOST souls! Can you get a faint idea of the measureless depths of meaning in these two small words! What oceans of tears! What overwhelming bursts of wailing and gnashing of teeth! What eternities of despair! Irredeemably lost! No chance for a light to shine out on their devil-begirt, downward, outward, Hellward pathway! Lost to happiness and holiness! Lost to God and the redeemed! Lost to Heaven and hope! Lost! and no hope of ever being found! Not one dim, distant hope of ever being anything but more *hopelessly, ruinously, despairingly* lost during all the eternities to come!

From woe to more woe; misery to more misery; ever, always lost! Lost, because they would be lost. Lost, while their bosom friend was found! Lost while Jesus was seeking them; lost, but they would not be found. They gained the world, and lost their souls! They gained the shadow and lost the substance; gained the briars, and lost the flower; gained famine, and lost plenty; gained foes and lost a Friend; gained "Eternal punishment" and lost "Eternal life".

Lost amid the outer darkness! Lost in the smoke of torment! Lost in the Lake of Fire and brimstone! Lost amid the myriad of tormenting demons! *Lost! Lost! LOST*
(*The Witness*).

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