



Assembly Testimony



Contents

MEDITATIONS ON THE OFFERINGS

by John M. Cowan

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by R. W. Beales

BRETHREN

Review by The Editor

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

by John Ritchie

SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER

by B. Smith

SPHERE AND SERVICE OF WOMEN

by A. G. Clarke

HOW I WAS CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD IN INDIA

by W. M. Darling

"And a Man shall be as an hiding
place from the wind, and a
covert from the tempest; as
rivers of water in a dry place,
as the shadow of a great rock in
a weary land" Isaiah 32. 2.

A MAN SHALL BE . . .

O lovely Man! none can with Thee compare,
My hiding place from every wind that blows;
In Thee my heart is freed from anxious care,
I know, Thy love to me unceasing flows.

My covert from the wild and stormy blast,
Whose fury would my trusting soul alarm;
In Thee I shelter 'till the storm is past,
Safe in Thy keeping nought can do me harm.

From Thee the living streams of life abound,
Whose healing waters make the spirit whole;
Who drink of Thee eternal life have found,
And ne'er again shall thirst the longing soul.

Thou Rock of ages, here I find sweet rest,
Beneath Thy shadow in a weary land,
A pilgrim on my way, supremely blest,
To that sweet Home which love for me has
planned.

W. E. Earl.

BRIEF MEDITATIONS ON THE OFFERINGS

by JOHN M. COWAN, Motherwell.

THE TRESPASS OFFERING

IT has not been left to man to measure the distance to which the waywardness of his trespass has taken him in departure from God, nor to estimate the degree of loss sustained by God through his trespass against Him. Only God alone is able to estimate, and to place the correct value upon the loss that has been His, and the degree of restoration and reparation which must be made. The balance of the sanctuary only can unerringly measure, and, in accordance with its finding, the Divine pronouncement is made. "He shall bring a ram for his trespass offering, unblemished, the best of the flock, divinely valuated as to the principal, with a fifth part added thereto". Here then is the measure of our guilt and there is no difference.

As it would be entirely impossible for man to meet the requirement of God in relation to his trespass, in an actual way, how happy are we that the imposition of the Divine requirement has been laid upon Him—upon Christ: "that the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all". "It has pleased the Lord to bruise Him; Thou hast put Him to grief: Thou hast made His soul a trespass offering; He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. . . . because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53). Psalm 69. 1-4 presents also something of the awfulness of His suffering for us, before He was able to say, "Then I restored that which I took not away."

In the Sin Offering our conception of the enormity of our guilt might be varied and consequently a graded offering is permitted. God only has been wronged and such is the condescension of His grace that even the feeblest conception of the worth of Christ is sufficient to meet our need. In the Trespass Offering there is that degree of wilfulness which incurs that greater degree of responsibility; not only has sin been committed but damage also has been done and only the ram of the trespass with all that is implied therein can be accepted by God. In the presentation of the offerings we see Christ typified by bullock, by lamb, by goat, by pigeon or turtle dove, or even by a handful of flour. Here in the Trespass Offering it is Christ in Ram character; each of these differing conceptions bring out the variegated excellencies of the Lord

Jesus and something of His manifold worth is portrayed in each: surely a contemplation of Christ in the character of the ram of the Trespass Offering would be a productive exercise in each of our experiences.

As we have already indicated, the demands of the Trespass Offering, so far as the Godward side is concerned, could only be met by Christ alone. He only knew the extent of the damage done, and the full amount of the loss sustained by God in our trespass against Him. Because of our inability to restore that which we had taken away from God, Christ in Trespass Offering character has undertaken this task for us, and in the fulness of that which He has accomplished upon Calvary's Cross He has restored in principal all that was lost by God and enriched Him with the added fifth.

One might be inclined to ask: What did God lose by our trespass against Him, or to what extent have we defrauded Him? What has been taken away from Him which requires to be restored in full and not in principal alone but the fifth part also added thereto? If we could enter into an intelligent consciousness of all that this has meant, some sense of the seriousness of our trespass might be apprehended by us, with an enlarged appreciation of the greatness of the work accomplished for us in "the restoration of that which He took not away". Would this be what the Lord Jesus had in mind in John 17. 4 when He said, "I have glorified Thee upon the earth, I have finished the work which Thou hast given Me to do". Man's chief end was to glorify God and, in failing to do so, he was robbing God: all the Glory and Honour, all the Reverence that was due His Holy Name, man has failed to give Him, and thus God has been deprived and defrauded. All the Glory and Honour that man has failed to render to God, Christ has fully repaid; not only has God received the full amount which was His due, but He has been abundantly enriched by the adding of the fifth part.

This may be somewhat of the sense of the Trespass Offering as it affected God alone, but let us remember that not only have we trespassed against God, but we have also so constantly trespassed against our fellow man. There is a Divine principle, however, that what we are unable to do for ourselves, God is prepared to do for us. Such is the infinitude of His Grace! While this is amazingly true, there is also the other side of the story, that what we can do for ourselves, God expects us to do.

This then would be the full complement of the Trespass Offering and as we with any measure of apprehension are able to enter into the extent to which our blessed Lord

Jesus was prepared to go on our behalf in payment of the great debt incurred by us through trespassing against God, surely this should promote that degree of willingness on our part to restore in full, with the added fifth, all that we have taken in trespassing against our brother. Would this be the implication in Matthew 5. 23? "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and **then** come and offer thy gift".

Is this not the reason why there is oftentimes so much barrenness amongst us, yet we treat this as of so little consequence; if we can put a face on things outwardly, that is all that seems to matter so far as we ourselves are concerned. This might be alright in the eyes of our brethren, but let us remember that there is an eye with which we have to do—the penetrating, all-searching, unsleeping eye of God. Notice what Matthew 5. 23 does not say: When you bring your gift and there rememberest that **God** has aught against thee. Think, my brethren, of the great debt that Christ has paid for you and me, and yet how reluctant we oftentimes are to yield up that which rightfully belongs to our brethren and, when compelled, how grudgingly we assent to do so, by paying only the principal and forbearing to add the fifth part thereto. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. When and where such a state of things exists, one fears that there is very little comprehension of what the Ram of the Trespass Offering really means. "Be ye then doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves, for if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was".

Let us look long, my brethren, at what we once were, then take a longer look at that which Christ has made us. Surely this should keep us humble and, with enlarged affections, seek to do that which is the will of God for us.

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

(Chapter 12)

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES, Ipswich.

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

THIS is referred to in 12. 1. For those running such a race must divest themselves of all impediments, "every weight" as does the athlete, and the sin (of unbelief?) which is also like an impeding garment "easily surrounding" so that it may be run to the end with "endurance"

(not "patience"). Looking off, stedfastly "unto Jesus"—His earthly Name is here given for His earthly course is referred to. It is not, as so many imply, looking off to Him in the heavens, but to Him who ran the race here below, enduring the cross, despising the shame, and has won the crown and throne. He is the Leader and Chief of all whose names have gone before, indeed He it is who sustained them. They had not yet resisted unto blood as many of those who had gone before. (11. 35-38).

Indeed they were in danger of "forgetting" and "receding" (vv. 5-11). It is a pity that the word "discipline" has been rendered "chastisement" for the worthies who have gone before experienced discipline, sometimes self discipline and sometimes by God. There are three ways in which His discipline may be received and treated. Firstly the two extremes both of which are dangerous, despising it, or making light of it, brushing it off on the one hand and on the other fainting under it, both of which would hinder us in the race, indeed would take us out of it. The third (v. 11) is being exercised thereby that it may have the effect intended, making us partakers of His holiness (v. 10), and producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

There follows the exhortation "lift up", "make", "follow" and "look". Other are following us as we follow those going before, and they might well stumble over us, or be turned aside, or be defiled.

We have a host of witnesses, not come to "see" but to "say" to us what the life of faith has meant to them, to encourage us. They had had no such lives of faith before them to assist them.

We quote from Mr. P. Parson's notes: "No man before Abel had offered a gift offering to God, no one before Enoch had 'by-passed' death, no flood had ever occurred before Noah's time, Abram set out not knowing whither he went . . . Joseph anticipated the unprecedented exodus of a whole nation, a city had never fallen as Jericho did".

These exhortations are all warnings and admonitions, appropriate to a people who halted between two opinions, or were tempted in view of the persecutions they endured to "go back" but the writer asks "to what?" We are therefore to count the cost, not only of going on, but also going back. We might well say as Peter did, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Those who were "accepted" and "borne witness to" in chapter 11 are in contrast to one from the O.T. who was "rejected" (12. 16). Esau who was 'naturally' a finer man than Jacob with all his faults, nevertheless he had no heart nor time for spiritual things and treated his inher-

itance as of little worth until he lost it, and then sought it (i.e. not the place of repentance but the blessing) with tears, but many years before that episode he had sold it for a mere mess of pottage. Here again we have a 'typical' man but of whom is he the type? Some who hold 'partial rapture' views will say that as he was a true son of Isaac he must represent a true believer who is ultimately cast aside and must go through a kind of purgatory before he can be reinstated. But where, we must ask, is there any mention in this portion of the Rapture, and where any reinstatement? Nowhere. We therefore dismiss the idea. But cannot he represent the unbelieving part of the nation of Israel? We believe he not only can, but does. There are two actions of Esau in these two verses (16, 17), one based upon Gen. 25. 29-34 and the other on Gen. 27. 30-38, with about 45 years between, in which time he had plenty of opportunity of seeking God and reinstatement.

It must also be pointed out that we are now dealing with running the race, and gaining the prize, the inheritance, and this is always spoken of in the Word of God as something distinguished from initial soul salvation, and which has to do with reward and winning the prize and the goal which must always be kept clear in our minds if we are to arrive at the full truth. Position in the kingdom is always spoken of in connection not so much with initial faith but of faithfulness, but this is too large a subject to be pursued here. The reverent student of the Word must be left to follow this himself.

(See also "The Church and the Kingdom" by the same writer).

A REVIEW BY THE EDITOR

THE BRETHREN

MY attention has been drawn to an article entitled "The Brethren" by John L. Fear which appeared in "The Christian and Christianity To-day" on pages 12, 13 and 17 of the August 23rd, 1968 issue.

The author is correct in stating that "Any attempt to write a survey of the 'Brethren' is full of pitfalls". Realising this, one would have thought that he would have shown more wisdom than he has done, by making more thorough investigation. Instead, he has submitted an article which gives a completely biased survey. It is evident that while he is in an assembly in the South of England his knowledge is somewhat limited, and his enquiries have been made amongst only a small number of people in his region of England.

I hardly need to point out the mistake (a printer's error corrected in a later issue) at the foot of column one, "100

missionaries are associated with brethren in 60 different countries". This figure should be 1000! Note also that "The Counties Evangelistic Work" (an excellent work) with 21 full-time evangelists has been singled out for mention, but what of the greater number of full-time evangelists that are labouring all over England, in Scotland (many in the Borders and Northern districts) and a very large number in Northern Ireland? Again the activities of the Covenanter and Crusader groups in assemblies are over emphasised. The writer says:

"Through the Covenanter movement (founded by Brethren) and Crusader groups, evangelism amongst youth has a prominent place in most Assembly activities".

I submit that the majority of assemblies have Sunday School, Bible Class and other Youth Work in no way connected with these two movements.

Again mention is made of monthly journals, and here the author shows his lack of investigation. There are, as he stated "The Witness" (1870); "The Harvester" (1900); but how about "The Believer's Magazine" (1891)—these are the three magazines for which a charge is made. Then there are others, two of which are free, viz. "Precious Seed" and "Assembly Testimony", whose circulation is probably higher than the three just mentioned. There are numerous magazines published by assemblies in Canada, U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand.

Let me draw attention to the second last paragraph in the introduction, viz.

"The Brethren have their shortcomings. While the majority of local gatherings are virile and effective in their worship and witness, the testimony of others is marred by a general ossification and growth of traditionalism which has led to a loss of vision and vitality.

It is evident that the author is stating his own opinion which is the same as that held by the group with which he is in contact. The opposite is really the case for the assemblies in Scotland and Northern Ireland (also a number of areas in England) are far more traditional in their outlook (you will agree that just because a thing is traditional it is not necessarily wrong or bad or useless), yet those assemblies are far more virile than many of the companies which have embraced an incipid liberalism.

What amazes me is the list the author has given us of supposed well-known Brethren leaders (A. W. R. Allcock, Prof. F. F. Bruce, F. Roy Coad, H. L. Ellison, G. C. D.

Howley, C. J. Pickering, D. C. Rennie, H. H. Rowdon). I grant you that there are three of the list that are well-known—the others are comparatively unknown—the author calls them Brethren leaders! These are not leaders. They are undoubtedly men of excellent Christian character. I know some of them, have shared platforms with them—fine Christian gentlemen, showing many of the graces of Christ. These moral qualities I appreciate. This however does not make them our leaders. They may be considered leaders amongst a small group (with the exception of C.J.P.), some of which group have become associated with the “High Leigh” Conferences of the past and the “Swanwick” Conferences of the present. There are other worthy men whose names have been household words amongst us for many years. The slightest acquaintance with the “Brethren movement” should have been sufficient to make the author conscious of who they are.

One becomes rather tired of this constant harking back to the beginning of the “Brethren movement”; to the days when the dear saints were just feeling their way—and trying to build up from that an idea that in following their original vision we should have no strong convictions about anything, either doctrinally or ecclesiastically. Of course, those of us who have strong convictions about church matters are dubbed “crypto exclusives” or “influenced by exclusivism”. If one wants to know what so-called Brethren have believed over the years, it would be wise to go back over the past issues of “The Witness”, “The Harvester” and “The Believer’s Magazine”. These have contained articles that faithfully represent what has been believed among us for between 70 and 100 years. “The Harvester” represents the more liberal school (not the High Leigh group). “The Believer’s Magazine” represents the more conservative school, whereas “The Witness” (until more recent years) represented the middle-of-the-road, ordinary members of the movement. If you really want to know what the Open Brethren (I hate the term when used like this) believe, you will find it in these magazines. Whether the “Brethren movement” remains true to the original vision of its early leaders is really not the point. It would be better to ask whether we remain true to the Lord and to His Word.

I am not surprised that the brethren approached have answered in the way they have. The report of the High Leigh Conference made it evident that there was a strong leaning toward “Full-time Pastors on a retained salary”, “An interchanging of platforms with those outside the movement”, and “Women’s Participation in Public Prayer”. Some “so-called” ‘Brethren’ companies (and I

emphasise the "so-called") have already introduced these things, but they are very few in comparison with the large number that reject these new ideas. Again "Swanwick" showed a distinct leaning not merely to interdenominationalism but there were some ideas of Ecumenism that really shocked us!

I note C.J.P. says we have always tried to avoid the name "Brethren" and to avoid denominational status. He is right. "The Witness", published by the firm of which he is chairman has until recent years always taken that view, and Mr. W. E. Vine, M.A., former Editor of "Echoes of Service" wrote very pointedly and dogmatically on this matter. It is from the members of the group aforementioned that there has come an acceptance of the term "Brethren".

The author of the article had apparently put a series of questions to these supposed leaders.

(Look out for next issue).

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

by the late JOHN RITCHIE

Read 1 Samuel 22. 1-3; 2 Samuel 23. 8-21.

THE PLACE OF REJECTION

THE throne of Israel being for the present denied him, David flees as an exile to the Cave of Adullam, and there a feeble few gather around him to share his sorrow and rejection, and to own Him as their King. They were none of earth's great ones; only a few needy debtors and mourners in Israel. "Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented (margin—bitter of soul), gathered themselves unto him, and he became captain over them" (1 Samuel 22. 2). They had been taught of God to recognise in the exile David, the Anointed of the Lord, and they gave him the place that God had chosen him to fill as captain over His people Israel. (1 Sam. 13. 14). They preferred to be with God's Anointed in the Cave, rather than to be in the Palace with the man whom God had rejected. They identified themselves with God's ruler, and owned him as their lord at a time when popular opinion and the voice of the nation was against him, because they saw in him their rightful king, and in order to render that devotion and obedience which was his due, they broke every link with the house of Saul and cast in their lot with their rejected master. It is one of the clearest proofs of a saint's apprehension of the mind of God, and of His devotedness, when he is able, through grace, to tread a similar path. Our Lord Jesus Christ is now rejected and His authority disowned

as David's was then. There is no more room for Christ in the world now, than there was for the babe in the Inn at Bethlehem, and there is no more recognition of His authority as Ruler and Lord in the professing Church now, than there was when He stood up in the Temple at Jerusalem and declared it "desolate". Man has usurped His place, and cast out His Word, to make room for his own traditions. If any should question this, let him put it to the test. Let him enter any church or chapel in Christendom with an open Bible, and speak the Word of the Lord in all its fulness. Let him press Christ's claims as Lord of His house, in worship, ministry and divine order; let him test the practices and doctrines by "thus saith the Lord," and he will find the truth of what I say. They will cast him and his Bible out, as they did the man out of the Synagogue of old. There is no room for Christ's authority, or the supremacy of the Word of God as the final appeal in any sect in Christendom. The Gospel, and certain other favourite truths connected with it, are allowed in so-called "evangelical churches", the truth of baptism is held and practised in others, but truths of kindred importance must not be mentioned, else they would upset the "cause", disturb the peace of the congregation, and (probably this is the sorest grievance), depose the clergyman to the place that he is fitted to fill. No church can claim to be Christ's unless it has room for Christ's authority and His Word, to guide in everything. Many of the people of God, at the present time, are in distress and discontented, groaning under a state of things ecclesiastically, similar to what was found politically under the rule of Saul. They feel the low spiritual condition of things in the churches of which they are members. They lament the anti-scriptural practices, and the ritualistic and rationalist tendencies of the clergy. Many a panacea has been sought, but Saul still rules with an iron rod, and David is an exile. The only path open to those who desire to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Head and Lord in His Church, is to separate themselves from every association where they would be hindered, through man's traditions, from yielding hearty obedience to all His commandments, and "go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13. 13). There they will find others who have been similarly led to own Him as their Lord and who will be their companions in "the tribulation and Kingdom and patience which are in Jesus" (Rev. 1. 9, R.V.). I am well aware that all this will be questioned and, it may be, ridiculed, by those whose interest is to remain in the house of Saul, and who have no inclination to bear the reproach of Christ. Such has ever been the lot of those who go counter to the popular cur-

rent; they may count on a rough path and many foes. David and his followers were hunted on the mountains of Israel, although their enemies had to confess they had done no wrong (24. 17), nay more, that David was the chosen king (v. 20). Yet they continued to misrepresent and persecute David; but the end will amply recompense all who can wait for it. The day of rejection will come to an end, and the day of glory will dawn—"if we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2. 11). As one who well knew it sang—

"Soon will the cup of blessing, wash down earth bitterest woes.
Soon will the desert briar, give place to Sharon's rose:

Reproach be changed for glory: the Name on earth that's
banned,

Be graven on the white stone, in Immanuel's land."

(To be continued)

SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER

by BRYAN SMITH, Edinburgh.

AND on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon, and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not yet" (Mark 11. 12, 13). The third day had begun its course.

In Genesis 1 the earth, on the third day, rose from its watery grave as God caused the dry land to appear, gathering the waters together which He called seas. Thereupon we read, "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Gen. 1. 9-11). Three, the number of Divine manifestation linked here with attendant fruitfulness.

"And they came to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple" (Mark 11. 15). In the land, in the place that God had chosen to set His name, and in the house of God, the Saviour is found. It was the Divine centre of gathering where the glory had once been and where, in the person of Christ, it was found again. But his first action was to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple. The house was to be judged. The condition of the people He knew, the condition of the fig tree pictured that condition. Nor had the figs been gathered, "for," adds Mark, "the time of figs was not yet". The profusion of leaves gave the promise of much fruit, but, "He found nothing but leaves". On the third day the fruit tree was to yield fruit but in Israel the Lord found only a profession of fruitfulness to God while destitute and barren towards Him. "And when even was come He went out of the city" (Mark 11. 19). The barren fig tree and the desecrated temple were

what He encountered on that day.

"And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots" (Mark 11. 20). Very full is the account of the fourth day. Silenced on the previous day, the scribes and chief priests regain their composure and, supported this time by the elders, they say unto Him, "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things?" (Mark 11. 28). A question from them regarding His authority begins their disputation, a question from Him regarding David's assertion of His authority ends their disputation. "David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his son?" (Mark 12. 37).

The fourth day in the book of Genesis sees the setting of the sun and the moon in their relationship to the earth as God, in His power, now determined it. "He made the stars also". They are set to "give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1. 17, 18). Light is from heaven. Direction and rule is from above. But heaven's Ruler is refused on earth. Israel's history has spoken of no rule, misrule, and finally Gentile rule, the result of Divine judgment.

Here, the rulers in Israel refuse to answer the Lord's question. "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" To every question they put He had an answer in Divine wisdom. "And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words" (Mark 12. 13). Pharisees, blind guides, appointed by their fellows and willing to assume leadership. Herodians, supporters of the house of Herod, a king in Israel with no Divine title, but enjoying the favour of the Romans who delegated to him authority in Israel. To their ensnaring question the Lord reminds them that it is wise to submit to what was the result of God's governmental dealings with Israel. The remedy lay in devotion to God as revealed in His word. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12. 17). The Sadducees next come forward with their dispute as to the directions of the law. This is followed by the scribes question as to the first and great commandment, to whom the Lord subsequently says, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God". The rule and authority of God is thus prominent, all are again silenced if not won.

Leaving the temple, attention is drawn to the external garnishing of the temple building. The glitter of the precious stones, the costliness of its structure. But of old had the Lord decorated the heavens with silver stars sparkling in their brilliance. Disowning Himself, the temple

stones would be thrown down. Rejecting rule from above, the stars themselves would fall. The Lord's prophecy on the mount of Olives covers the destruction of the temple and of the city as then standing, and moves on to a consideration of the city and temple, as rebuilt, in the days of the great tribulation, and of the remnant, according to the election of grace, prior to the appearing of the Son of Man to rule in righteousness. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13. 24-26). Of the Lord's teaching on the mount, Matthew has more to say as the events of the fourth day drew to a close.

"After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread" (Mark 14. 1). Of the fifth day we have little recorded apart from Luke's general note. "And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to Him, in the temple, for to hear Him" (Luke 21. 37, 38). Of the beginning of sorrows, the Lord had spoken in His prophetic discourse. Of the final intensity of affliction He had also spoken. As with Israel in a future day, so with Himself then. Another day would see the beginning of His deepest sorrow. "Now is My soul troubled", again, "He was troubled in spirit" (John 13. 21). Before the day ended He would know the bitterness of suffering for sins on the cross—the Just for the unjust.

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (Gen. 1. 20). "And the evening and the morning were the fifth day" (Gen. 1. 23). Perhaps the fifth day, with its teeming oceans, would anticipate the sixth day, and speak of abundant life in Christ, while the fowls, able to soar above, ranging the open heavens, may speak of the power and liberty of that life. (To be continued)

SPHERE AND SERVICE OF WOMEN

by A. G. CLARKE

Adornment. The fall of man wrought a change from the primeval condition, Gen. 2. 25. The attempt of the guilty pair to cover their sin and shame proved a complete failure, Gen. 3. 7-8. They themselves realised this immediately they heard the voice of God, which betokened His presence in the garden. The wronged Creator in sorrowing love

provided for their recognised need by the death of substitutionary victims, 3. 21. In the light of subsequent procedure there is little reason to doubt that under divine direction man the sinner did the blood-shedding, Gen. 3. 21. In this way the truth afterwards stated in Lev. 17. 11 and Heb. 9. 22 was brought home to the conscience of Adam and Eve in a forcible manner. We see a clear foreshadowing of the redemptive work of Christ. The wearing of clothes, even the scanty covering of uncivilised tribes, bears striking testimony to the fact of the Fall. Animals have no such self-consciousness. The cult of nudity is but one of man's many efforts to deny the Fall by removing evidence! The Law enjoined a distinction between the attire of men and of women, Deut. 22. 5. The words in the latter part of this verse imply that God intended it to be an abiding principle. Christian women are instructed to wear apparel that is seemly with modesty and discretion. Neither immodesty nor slovenly dress commends the gospel. There is to be no ostentation or extravagance. The believer should be approved by good deeds not by gay dress, by consistent works not by costly wrappings, 1 Tim. 2. 9-10. God looks upon the heart not on the outward appearance, 1 Sam. 16. 7. This should encourage sisters who do not possess beauty of features and form. A meek and quiet spirit is precious in God's sight and should be highly esteemed among Christians. Men and women of the world may be attracted by the artificial styles of fashion, but these are corruptible and soon pass away, 1 Peter 3. 3-4; 1 John 2. 15-17; Rom. 12. 2. Certain adjustments necessary for health and comfort in various climates are not ruled out, but conspicuousness is to be avoided whether in new fashions or old.

With respect to so-called "beauty-aids" the only woman named in the Bible who used them is Jezebel, Ahab's wicked wife, surely an unenviable character for Christian sisters to follow, 2 Kings 9. 30. In the writings of the prophets we read scathing denunciations of the use of make-up, though applied to God's people, perhaps, in a metaphorical sense also, Jer. 4. 30; Ezek. 23. 40. As to the hair, it was designed of God to mark a distinction between the sexes, 1 Cor. 11. 14-15. Long hair is woman's glory. therefore modern practices such as bobbing, shingling and cropping in surrender to passing fashion cannot be well-pleasing to the Lord, 1 Cor. 10. 31. Trimming for health reasons may be advisable on occasion provided this is done with a clear conscience before God and not offered simply in excuse. A woman is to be truly feminine and not to ape masculinity. Both nature and revelation reprehend a woman with shorn head, 1 Cor. 11. 6, 15. Many present-day

fashions and practices are really a sign of revolt against the Creator's decrees.

REDEMPTION ORDER. In this there is no distinction of sex, Gal. 3. 28. All believers are alike in Christ Jesus, in Christ a new creation, 2 Cor. 5. 17. All are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3. 1), and all have equal share in the privileges of the Christian priesthood, 1 Peter 2. 5, 9. This blessed standing before God must not be confounded, however, with the present church order.

CHURCH ORDER is to maintain a testimony for God before angels and before men, 1 Cor. 11. 10; Eph. 3. 10-11; 1 Cor. 14. 23-25. In the Christian assembly the creation order still holds, 1 Cor. 14. 34-35; 1 Tim. 2. 11-15. In the latter passage reasons for this are given, namely (a) man's priority in creation (cp. 1 Cor. 11. 2, 8-9); (b) woman's frailty in transgression; (c) woman's fidelity to function. It is noticeable that when tempted by Satan Eve acted wrongly in independence of Adam. Moreover, fulfilment of her function is properly and mostly in the family sphere not in a public capacity. Therefore, in all assembly gatherings and among mixed audiences leadership is invested in the men. This refers to both teaching and audible praying, 1 Tim. 2. 8, 12; "the men (lit. adult males) . . . in every place" is surely a clear enough statement. No restrictions appear to be placed upon sisters speaking and praying in gatherings for women or children, provided the injunction as to a head-covering is observed in accordance with 1 Cor. 11. 2-16. Many women have natural ability for speaking but neither this nor modern practice in certain churches warrants disobedience to the word of God, however plausible arguments may sound. Apparent blessing upon such efforts is no true guide, Matt. 7. 21-23; 2 Cor. 5. 9. We need ever to be on guard lest the spirit of the age (Eph. 2. 2) should encroach upon the Lord's territory. Satan is always working to subvert divine order, but his defeat is assured and his doom certain and imminent, Romans 16. 20.

The ministry of Christian women has scope in a wide sphere of activities for which they are particularly suited. As a member of the Body of Christ, each has her function to perform for the edification of the whole, 1 Cor. 12. 7, 12ff. Most wives and mothers will find their time chiefly occupied in home duties. A well-ordered Christian household is a powerful witness for God in any neighbourhood. Experienced missionaries in heathen lands will readily testify to this. Elderly women, widows and unmarried sisters may have more opportunity to engage in outside work such as teaching a Sunday School class, visiting the

sick and sorrowing, distributing tracts, helping the singing in open-air witnessing, taking part in gatherings of women, and in personal work among neighbours. Elderly sisters are enjoined to teach the younger, Titus 2. 3-4. Again, we have an example of a Christian wife sharing with her husband in the enlightenment of a brother not so well instructed in the way of God, Acts 18. 26. Wives of elders in particular may be able to render valuable assistance in undertaking investigations among women-folk on behalf of the assembly, and perform other services, provided always that they possess the requisite qualifications similar to those given in 1 Tim. 3. 11; cp. Titus 2. 3. In the showing of hospitality to servants of Christ and other visiting saints, also to lonely believers, especially younger ones from ungodly homes, the wife obviously has the greater share, 1 Tim. 3. 2; 5. 10; Titus 1. 8; Romans 12. 13; Heb. 13. 2; 1 Peter 4. 9; cp. Acts 16. 15, 40. Christian women in the medical profession, nurses and school teachers all have an exceptional field to witness and work for the Lord. Examples of other forms of service are found in Matt. 27. 55; Mark 12. 41-44; 15. 41; Luke 8. 3; Romans 16. 1; Acts 9. 36-39. In practice women have often proved most generous givers. The word of God records many examples of women who displayed strong faith and rendered devoted service to God. Among the list of "honourable mentions" in Hebrews 11, we find named and unnamed women. A host of dear sisters in Christ, little noticed in the world, will meet in a coming day the approving word of their Lord, "She hath done what she could" Mark 14. 8.

(To be continued)

HOW I WAS CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD IN

INDIA

by W. M. DARLING

WHEN I was converted at ten years of age I had no thought beyond that of obtaining pardon for my sins and access to Heaven after death. However God did give to me, at that time, a realisation that, in His love, He was going to plan and provide for me not only for eternity but in this life too. This consciousness of the fatherly care of God was a great comfort to me when my father died later, and my trust was confirmed as I saw how my mother was helped by Him throughout a difficult period.

I learned much from my mother's example of steady

faith and practical service, which included giving much hospitality to the Lord's servants. So it was not difficult for me at an early age to accept the thought of serving the Lord abroad. This came to me when an aunt, Anna Fisher, on furlough from pioneer missionary work in Central Africa, spoke to me while we were walking home from the Sunday School in Lurgan Gospel Hall. She asked me if I had ever thought of going to serve the Lord Jesus in Africa. I had to say "No". The only thought of Africa that I ever had was a boy's dream of going to hunt big game! But the Lord used her question with the effect that from that time the thought of future missionary service was always with me.

The quality of my Christian life never justified my holding such an ambition and I had to learn that the privilege of service for the Master is not something we earn or merit but we receive it, like salvation itself, as a gift from His gracious hand. In early years I was hindered by a desire for popularity among school-fellows who did not know the Lord but eventually counter influences prevailed and I became ready to own the Lord in daily life. I was especially helped in facing up to this by the challenge I met in certain holiday camps, run, like the C.S.S.M., with the purpose of touching young people for Christ. Going on to University I went through my medical studies and at the same time was helped in my desire to witness for the Lord by others, like-minded, in the Bible Union.

By the time I graduated, war had broken out and I had to face the question of military service. My conscience was not happy that this was for me. Eventually I came to know of an expedition going to war-torn China to do relief and medical work—the China Convoy of the Friends Ambulance Unit. I joined this and worked for four years in that country. My service was mainly of a practical nature, but there was opportunity to help the missionary forces and I learned much.

Coming home, I hoped to return as a missionary to China but I was conscious of the need for preparation. In particular I had problems to resolve regarding the reliability of the Scriptures and I began to re-read the Bible praying that God would teach me His truth. As I read I was reassured of the great fact of the integrity of the Scriptures—as entirely reliable as their Author.

I was fortunate to become assistant in general practice to the late Dr. Sydney Matthews. While with him I had the opportunity of fellowship and active Christian life in the assembly at Finaghy, Belfast. But this happy period

was cut short by a severe illness. I had had a pleurisy in China and the affected lung now went on to develop tuberculosis, which flared up and threatened my life. Any possibility even of regaining a working life, much less of going abroad as a missionary, seemed gone. But God gave confidence to me, and to many praying for me, that He had a purpose to fulfil even through these adverse circumstances, and so it proved. New medicines and surgical methods of treatment came in and, after some four years in hospital, I returned to working life.

Five years later I was still in good health and was working on the staff of the microbiology department of the Queen's University medical school in Belfast. I had to decide whether or not to go on in this type of work. The time seemed ripe to enquire about missionary service and my first thought was to see if one of the Christian medical colleges in India could use my services—but there was no immediate opening. However a casual mention of my thoughts in a letter to Miss Peebles, a senior missionary nurse working at Sankeshwar in the Belgaum District of India, resulted in an invitation from the doctors and workers there asking me to come and relieve over the period, first of Dr. McMillan's furlough and then of Dr. Gilbert's. I had had a long-standing prayer interest in the work at Sankeshwar and, at the time of my illness, had sent out my leather instrument case for use in the maternity work there, little thinking that the time would come when I would follow it!

I told the elders of the Ballyhackamore assembly in Belfast, where I was then in fellowship, about the matter and also discussed it with two or three other Christians, whose counsel I valued. The elders encouraged me to accept, provided medical reports were favourable. I went therefore to my chest physician, the same who ten years before had had the unpleasant task of giving a very bad prognosis to my family about me. Now it was different. To my surprise he was even enthusiastic about the proposal. He said he knew the Belgaum District at first-hand from war-time experience and he thought the climate would suit me. The late Dr. Chave Cox agreed with his report and the end of it was that I was commended by the Assembly for the period of two years envisaged and as the Lord might later lead. The Lord also encouraged me in other ways so that I was able to go out at the end of 1957 assured that this was indeed His will for me.

After a year it became evident that my health was standing up to the adjustment to India and so my fellow-workers suggested commendation on a longer-term basis. This the

elders of my home assembly were glad to do. When corresponding about the matter I felt led to name a period of commital of ten years. This period has now ended.

In 1960 my wife-to-be, Grace Beattie, came out to India and began language study. A year later we were married in Sankeshwar. She has indeed been a help-meet for me and the Lord has blessed us with the gift of five children, including first-born twins. In all things He has been faithful and we can truly say that we have lacked nothing.

Now we have returned to this country. My health is unimpaired and in many ways we would be glad to return after a furlough to the land and work, which we have come to love. But this does not seem to be the Lord's will for us at present and I am therefore returning to salaried work in this country in the Autumn.

In my ten years in India I have done so very little, but it has been a joy to watch the Lord at work and see the increase of the church and the growth of the believers in ability and readiness to take responsibility.

SPIRITUAL BALANCE

OR THE PERILS OF UNSCRIPTURAL EXTREMES

by **WILLIAM BUNTING**

Flush Paper Covers **7/-** by post 7/4.

EDITOR: A. M. S. Gooding.

COMMITTEE

Honorary Joint Treasurers:

Thomas Beggs, James Mayhew, James Moore (Buckna).

Hon. Secretary: John Hogg.

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people.

Friends residing in England, Scotland and Wales may kindly forward their donations to:

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, England.

Friends, except those residing in Great Britain, should please forward gifts to:

John Hogg, "Beth-Asher", Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Northern Ireland.

Please address all correspondence, including all new orders, orders for back numbers and extra copies, cancellations and changes of address to John Hogg, at above address.