



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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My Hiding Place

(Verses found in the pocket of Major Andre who was hanged during the Revolutionary war when 29 years old)

Hail, sovereign love, which first began
The scheme to rescue fallen man !
Hail, matchless, free, eternal grace,
Which gave my soul a Hiding Place !

Against the God who built the sky
I fought with hands uplifted high—
Despised the mention of His grace
Too proud to seek a Hiding Place.

Enwrapped in thick Egyptian night,
And fond of darkness more than light,
Madly I ran the sinful race,
Secure—without a Hiding Place !

But thus the eternal counsel ran :
Almighty Love, arrest that man !
I felt the arrows of distress,
And found I had no Hiding Place.

Indignant Justice stood in view ;
To Sinai's fiery mount I flew ;
But Justice cried with frowning face,
This mountain is no Hiding Place !

Ere long a heavenly voice I heard,
And mercy's angel soon appeared.
He led me, with a beaming face,
To JESUS as a Hiding Place.

On Him almighty vengeance fell,
Which must have sunk a world to hell !
He bore it for a sinful race,
And thus became their Hiding Place.

Should sevenfold storms of thunder roll
And shake this globe from pole to pole,
No thunderbolt shall daunt my face,
For JESUS IS MY HIDING PLACE !

“And a MAN shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest” (Isa. 32. 2.)

A New Year Message

by the late HANDLEY BIRD

"On! dare and suffer all things,
'Tis but a stretch of road,
And then the glorious welcome
And then the face of God."

"NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER."

A NEW YEAR'S CONSIDERATION

HOW this stirs our heart! "Nearer." Nearer the goal. Nearer the end of this day of opportunity. Nearer the Judgment Seat. Nearer the Face of God. What does the Scripture say to us on such an occasion? There are four mighty words recurring in the records of our Lord's life, and in the Epistles which are a trumpet call to God's people as we stand on the verge of Eternity. They are *zelos* (zealous), *ektenes* (intent, earnest), *agon* (agony, struggle), and *spoude* (spurt, earnestness). They are the expression of

A LIFE IN EARNEST,

at its utmost.

1. "**Zeal**," or jealousy, is the white heat of a heart on fire for God. It is at times used of "bitter envying in the heart," as one of the patriarchs when "moved with envy they sold Joseph"—but it also describes an "earnest coveting" of the best God can give (1 Cor. 12. 31; 14. 39); of being "provoked" to "hot anger" as Rom. 10. 19; or a "jealous love" and a "fervent mind" and "spirit" (2 Cor. 7. 7; Rom. 12. 11). Above all it describes the most blessed, and the most awful passion of God Himself: "I am jealous over you with

THE DIVINE JEALOUSY"

(2 Cor. 11. 2), and the "fiery indignation which devours the adversaries" (Heb. 10. 27). In each it is the same word 'zeal' that is used though so variously translated.

It is written of Him who is our example that "zeal for God's house consumed Him" (John 2. 17; Psalm 119. 139), a passion that could not bear a dishonour to His Father, and He calls us to be devoured with a like desire and to be "peculiar" in this abandon, and "hot" for good works (Titus 2. 14), where again the same word is used, for it is the enthusiast that accomplishes things for God, "it takes a crank to turn a wheel." To be afraid of such

extremes and to allow the soul to cool off is the road to Laodicea's fate (Rev. 3. 19, 20). "Be **zealous** therefore and repent, behold

I STAND AT THE DOOR."

2. **Ektenes** describes that expansion or intensity of spirit that strains at the leash and stretches out after God. Peter characteristically uses it in his first Epistle: "Seeing ye have . . . unfeigned love of the brethren, see above all things that it is

AN OUTSTRETCHED LOVE ;

and "reaching to the utmost limit" (1. 22 ; 4. 8). He is remembering his deliverance from prison, when his brethren made prayer "without ceasing"; **ektenes**—intense and prolonged, and thus prevailing, prayer for him (Acts 12. 5). But again it is our blessed Lord who shows us most vividly what this means, for in His struggle in the garden He prayed "more earnestly," lit., "intensely," at the utmost stretch of soul, till "the sweat fell as great drops of blood !" We can only stand in love and wonder at such a revelation of passionate ardour of soul and flaming love to God and man ; but it is to this reaching out of spirit that we are also called.

3. **Agon**. This root is once translated "agony"; in the scripture last referred to (Luke 22. 44). "And being in an agony He prayed more fervently", but elsewhere it is always rendered "conflict", "fight", "labour", "contention", "strive" or "race". "Let us run the race before us (same root) for we have not yet resisted unto blood **striving** (same root) against sin" (Heb. 12. 1-4). The word refers to the tremendous strain of the wrestler or the runner in the Stadium (1 Cor. 9. 24, 25, 27) where "everyone who strives" i.e. (agonizes), buffets and enslaves his body

LEST HE BE REJECTED.

It is Paul who also tells us of the great agony (conflict) he had for his brethren in Colosse (Col. 2. 1), in Philippi (Phil. 1. 30), and in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2. 2). Whether in intercession or in evangelizing it was ever with "great struggling" that he toiled for God. Every exhortation to us to this "fight of faith" speaks of the utmost effort, the tremendous strain on soul and body of one who would win the approval in the day approaching. There is nothing easy or commonplace here. It speaks of the ardent temper of a soul inflamed by hope and love.

4. **Spoude** (haste) is the last of these great roots, and is translated "very diligently", "more earnestly and carefully", "instantly", "with forwardness", "endeavouring" and "hasten", in our New Testament. It is

THE WORD OF THE LAST LAP.

As the Corinthian runners turned the end of the course for the final round to the goal, they were faced by large notices on either side bearing this one word "spoude" (spurt)! Now for the supreme and final effort to win the crown. "Wherefore," cries Peter, "haste, make your election sure, and get an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord". "For knowing that I must speedily put off this tabernacle I will hasten" (2 Peter 1. 5, 10, and 14-15). And Paul uses the same expression, "And we, brethren, having been bereaved of seeing you for a time, with much desire 'hasten' the more to see you face to face" (1 Thess. 2. 17). Chas. Simeon, of Cambridge, when told he ought to retire from active work at his age, replied, "What! shall I run less earnestly when so near the goal."

It is the hard and "unmoved heart" that is our greatest danger at this last hour, a dried up soul such as Hebrews 3 and 4 so solemnly warns us against. "For there remaineth a rest for the people of God,

LET US HASTEN THEREFORE"

(one last spurt of consuming desire and ardour of soul) "lest any fall in the same way of unbelief." This is God's way to

A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

A well known preacher being asked for a New Year's motto for some Christian workers, suggested the words, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want," from Wesley's hymn, "Jesus Lover of my Soul." The word **want** in the sentence has the Old-English meaning of **need**. Bearing this in mind the words express the all-sufficiency of Christ for Christian life or service. He is needed first of all as a Saviour and a Keeper. But we need Him also as our Priest in intercession and our Advocate to restore communion when it is broken. All we need is found in Him, and He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So we may boldly say . . . I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

THE SAVIOUR'S SEVEN SAYINGS

by RAY L. DAWES

(Continued)

SIXTH

"It is finished" (John 19. 30). Finished His perfect life, finished the prophetic types and shadows, finished the work that saves, finished His suffering and shame. "All, all is finished now . . ." What triumph and supremacy over every opposing force is conveyed in these words. The Saviour sets His own seal on His service. Hence this saying is again suitable to John's Gospel where it is only found.

To fulfil God's will is the underlying theme of John's Gospel. This was the declared purpose of Christ's coming (John 6. 38) ; His constant pursuit in life (John 8. 29) ; the satisfying portion of His soul (John 4. 34). He would not rest until the Father's will was perfectly fulfilled. He looked forward to finishing His work (John 4. 34). Yet in a divine sense regarded it as already completed (John 17. 4). Although the Jews sought to slay Him (John 5. 1), the Lord Jesus confidently asserted "the works which the Father hath given Me to **finish**" (John 5. 36). The work of redemption in His death, and the works of divine witness in His life would be brought to completion whatever the opposition.

Standing in direct connection with the O.T. scriptures ('accomplished' in v. 28 is the same word as 'finished' v. 30), the saying must embrace the whole range of O.T. prophecies, even prophecies yet to be fulfilled are confirmed in the Cross. The drama of redemption was being slowly presented from generation to generation, from age to age, but now in Christ the final Act is staged and on the Cross, the closing scenes are revealed. All that the O.T. pointed forward to finds its fulfilment in Christ. He is the end of law, "It is finished". To indicate what the cry meant God Himself rent the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom, see Matt. 27. 51. At last the way was open directly into the presence of God and God could come out in the unrestrained exercise of His love and grace in blessing men.

More important than the blessing of men, however, is the glory of God. For only when a work is accomplished in a perfect manner can God be completely glorified. When the work of the tabernacle was finished to the last detail, "then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and

the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40. 33-34). Likewise the temple (cp. 1 Kings 7. 51 and 1 Kings 8. 10-11). How grand that God was fully glorified in the finished work of Christ on earth. The Lord anticipated the end in these great words, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17. 4). The very realm of man's rebellion has been the scene in which God has been glorified, and will yet be the place of manifested glory in the Millennium.

The Lord leaves us an example here too. He finished the work. Cannot we then complete our tasks for Christ. We are tempted to do much, but finish little; to take on service, but soon give in or give up. The Lord's work needs those who will take on gospel and assembly responsibilities and carry them through to completion. Many are good starters, but few are good finishers. We are too much like Archippus as individuals in need of the same exhortation, "Take heed to the ministry that thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil (complete, finish) it" (Col. 4. 17). We are also like Sardis, as assemblies, of whom the Lord had to say, "I have not found thy works perfect (complete) before God" (Rev. 3. 2). Let us so labour that we might be able to say, "I have finished the course . . ." as did Paul, to earn the "well done" of our Lord and Master, and in our measure glorify God on the earth.

SEVENTH

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit"
(Luke 23. 46).

The conscious presence of the Father is now felt again and the familiar form of address returns, "Father". It indicates that deep eternal communion which was constant on earth and carried back to be continued in heaven again. The darkness gives way to a blue, unclouded Heaven. The doors of Heaven now "swing wide" to welcome Him. The Father's hands, so to speak, outstretch towards Him; Christ's spirit reaches upwards into their clasp. What love and eagerness are seen in the Father's attitude; what relief and rest are expressed in the Saviour's cry.

The verb 'commit' strongly suggests that this was a deliberate act of Christ. It is not the petition of a creature but the purpose of the Son; not His wish but His will. He had power over His own spirit, and places it confidently

in the trusted hands of the Father. This is confirmed by the divine comment in John 19. 30, "He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." The will is here in action. The head does not fall helplessly at the moment of death, He reclines it heavenwards, then deliberately dismisses His spirit. Truly, "no man took His life, He had power to lay it down" (John 10. 18).

Many have been the saints since who have entered Heaven with the words of their Master upon their lips. The communion known on earth is carried into Heaven. We have no power over the spirit. Ours is a prayer, though a confident one and the expression "receive my spirit" is more appropriate, as Stephen uttered (Acts 7. 59). We can be sure, however, that every ransomed spirit is in the safe keeping of the Father's eternal hands (cf. John 10. 29).

The Epistle to the Philipians

THE EPISTLE OF SACRIFICE AND JOY

(Continued)

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES

THIS church is indicated as every New Testament church should be, "saints in Christ Jesus with the elders and deacons". It is not, we submit, sufficient for "two or three gathered together in His Name" to constitute a New Testament assembly, neither does this appear to be intended in Matthew 18 which really has in view two or three gathered in His Name for prayer as the context clearly shows, the "For" of v. 20 throwing us back upon the preceding verse which commences, "Again I say unto you that if two 'out of' you shall agree . . ." which may militate against what has been so widely taught, but which is there so stated. We are not losers by allowing scripture to say what it does say, for of course we know that wherever saints are "gathered together" in His Name, He is there, for whatever purpose they come together, they can claim His authority and His presence. He is always in a special sense "in the midst of the church". See Hebrews 2. 12, etc.

After Paul's usual salutation he thanks God for them and in his prayer for them makes request with JOY because of their practical fellowship in the Gospel, for they had been partakers with him in it. This was the work of God in them and would be seen perfected in the Day of Christ, a consummation always before the Apostle.

He longed after and prayed for them, for Love,

knowledge and judgment. The R.V. says they were to try the things that differ (soon he is going to speak of such) and be sincere or thoroughly transparent and without any cause of stumbling to others and again he has the day of Christ in view, when all will be seen as it really is and be rewarded accordingly. "Sincere" means transparent "to pass the test of sunlight" as a gem would be held up to the light or the sun to discover any flaw or detect any pollution, inward or outward.

They are to be without offence, with no cause to stumble others. Soon the day of Christ would apply such tests to the lives of the saints.

He and his Gospel had become better known than had he been free to proclaim it, and that right at the centre of the Empire, "Caesar's court," and some were emboldened to have fellowship with him there in such circumstances. He could even rejoice if some were naming the Name of Christ in order to add to his sufferings and to bring him into further disrepute. This would not necessarily fasten his bonds upon him more securely, but might even bring about his release which may be the meaning of the word "salvation" in v. 19. This word "salvation" however need not mean bodily salvation from imprisonment, although he did expect to be set free but may mean that his adversaries could not achieve their objective in casting him down or making his bonds more irksome, nor in impeding other Christians from witnessing, through fear of consequences. (See other uses of this word in 1. 28 and 2. 12).

In any event even should it cause his death this could not but avail good for him and them. Whichever way it was he only desired that Christ should be magnified in his body whether by life or by death. To have lived was Christ, to die would be gain (more of Christ, some have suggested). Nothing could separate from Him. His great desire was that Christ should be magnified in his body.

This word "magnify" means to make great. Paul had once belittled Him, now he desires the very opposite at whatever cost. The telescope brings the heavenly bodies nearer to sight so as to enable them to be examined and the details to be enlarged. The microscope does the opposite, it enlarges small nearer objects to the view, so that their details can be examined and understood. So Christ Himself cannot be made greater, but in the life of the servant, the details of that unique character can be brought into view and enlarged in the view of others.

Do we so "enlarge" Christ, or is He belittled in the sight of others ?

We may say that God in the Old Testament was brought nearer to man but in the New Testament revelation Christ the self humbled One has come nearer still so that the many sided glories of God could be seen in detail. In this epistle these moral glories are to be seen in the saints, as they will be in eternity. This is what Paul desired for himself and for them, Christ magnified in his body whether by life or death. What a prospect for us.

The earnest expectation envisages the idea of the outstretched neck of anticipation (see Romans 8. 19, the only other occurrence of this word, but in that case applying to the final liberation of the whole creation).

It almost appears as if he conceived that the choice was his and which he did not know how to resolve. He is in a great strait, his earnest desire was to depart and be with Christ (a very clear testimony that the soul, the real self is immediately in His presence at death, and because of which it is "very far better" to go), but he seems confident that he is at present to remain. In several of these epistles from the prison except the last (2 Timothy) Paul seems confident that he will be liberated for a further term of service and this, it is believed, came about.

From the very first he had to suffer for Christ and very early on for them it had been the same, as it was now in that of the Roman converts around him. It is "given to us" thus to suffer as well as to believe. Again "salvation" (v. 28) is not necessarily initial salvation of the soul but equates with v. 19 suggesting salvation from despair. Verse 23 concerning "departure" indicates the unmooring of a ship, or the striking of a tent or camp. Verse 27 speaks of their "citizen life" and "striving together", the only strife permitted the Christian (see also at 2. 3) is an allusion to the games.

The wording of v. 28 is difficult but it does not mean that the sufferings of the Christians denoted that they were to come under God's judgment, but that such was an omen to the ungodly, whether they understood it or not, of their own ultimate perdition "and that from God."

These enemies have already been referred to and are here seen again and will be once more in 3. 18-19.

The conflict of the Gospel (v. 30) had always raged around the Apostle, even as it had done around the Lord Jesus, and he seemed to be the object of attack on every side. See 2 Corinthians. (To be continued)

Mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens

by the late WALTER SCOTT.

Matthew 13.

THE WHEAT AND TARE-FIELD PARABLE

(Verses 24-30)

PERSONS have had considerable difficulty in this parable, from not clearly distinguishing between the "Church" and "Kingdom." The consequences of confounding the two have been most hurtful to souls. Papists and Protestants alike have erred in this, and based their persecutions of each other on the fatal mistake of supposing that the field is the Church—"the field is the WORLD" (v. 38). The sower in this parable is Jesus, the Son of Man, sowing instrumentally—that is, through His servants. They slept while they should have watched; but Satan, in his ceaseless activity, **never sleeps**—a lesson well worth learning by saint and sinner. The consequence of this slothfulness was that tares were sown in the field. Soon the result appeared—tares and wheat growing together. Now comes the anxious question of the servants: Are we to pluck up the tares?—that is, the children of the wicked one. "Nay," was the touching reply, "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together till the harvest." He would rather allow this mixed state of good and evil to continue in their Master's field, because in their attempt to "root up" the tares they might injure the wheat. But observe **very carefully**—first, that the field is the **world**, not the Church; and, second, that both were to grow together—not to have **fellowship** together—a very different thing. It is not the presence of evil in me which hinders or can hinder communion with God; nay, the sin in me is a very good reason indeed why I should go to God about it, and have communion with Him regarding it. It is the **allowance** of evil—the practice of it—which hinders and interrupts the holy and blessed walk with God. The world will be cleared of evil men by Christ at the harvest—i.e., at the end of the age; not before it (v. 41). There are some lessons of deepening importance to be gathered from a devout perusal of this parable.

THE MUSTARD SEED (vv. 31-32)

The third parable is that of the mustard seed, "the least of all seeds." This is a picture of Christianity exceedingly insignificant in its rise. Latterly, however, it

becomes a great power in the world—a vast political system in the earth—so much so that the birds of the air lodge in its branches. There is an exceedingly solemn thought in all this—solemn, as showing the rapid and awful increase of evil; for if, in the **first** parable, the fowls took away the seed, in the **third**, corrupt Christianity, or the earthly profession of the name of Christ, positively affords a shelter for these same fowls. The Kingdom of the heavens has thus become a huge worldly political system built up by Satan, and which, to all its other iniquities, has wickedly attached the name of Christ. In the days of Constantine—fourth century—the so-called Church became the dominant power in the State. This has been the arrogant and pretentious claim of the Papacy ever since her rise. Make the Church great; that has been her ruin spiritually. She may boast of her wealth, and aim at political position and worldly greatness, but, in the eyes of the Lord, she is all the poorer, all the more destitute of true spiritual power and riches (Rev. 3. 17). The more she climbs the ladder of worldly fame, the deeper she morally sinks. The true Church is in the world, but is not of it. The Church and the world once walked **apart**, now they are in each other's arms. What a loss to both! Daniel 4 sufficiently indicates the meaning of the symbol of the **tree**. Historically there is a reference to the time when Christianity became a great power in the world; when thousands, by threats and cajoleries, nominally became Christian; when offices of state could only be filled by the baptised: when an Emperor could sit in the councils of the Church and enforce its—or rather his—decrees at the point of the sword; when a whole army were Christianised through baptism by imperial command. May the Lord enable us to walk apart from **all** political parties and worldly principles! “Our **citizenship** (conversation) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3. 20).

Notes on the First Epistle of Peter

by the late Wm. RODGERS.

IN the titles which, in our English Bible, are prefixed to the epistles of James, Peter, and Jude, and also in that of John's first epistle, there occurs a word not found in the heading of any of the writings of Paul, the word “general.” There is nothing of inspiration associated with its use, for the earliest manuscripts of these epistles are

without it ; but it may serve to draw our attention to the fact that, whereas Paul's letters are written to certain local churches, or individuals, named in their opening paragraphs, those are addressed in a much wider and more vague manner, either to saints in various places, or to the saints in general.

This, however, does not imply that there is anything less for the Lord's people collectively in the one group of epistles than in the other. In 1 Corinthians, which is the most characteristically local of all Paul's writings, we find that the words, "To the church of God which is at Corinth," are followed by "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." And Peter himself, in 2 Peter 3. 15, speaks of Paul's epistles as "written UNTO YOU," although according to his own phrase he is addressing "Them that have obtained like precious faith with us," without reference to any particular locality.

Of all these so called general epistles, 1 Peter is the only one that designates territorially those who were to be its first recipients, and very extensive the designation is. The apostle writes (ch. 1. 1, R.V.) : "To the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," five larger provinces which cover the greater part of the country now known as Asia Minor. Three of them, Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia, have been named together in Acts 2. 9 amongst the places where the Jews of the Dispersion, that were gathered at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, had their homes, and doubtless some from those parts were included in the three thousand who received the gospel through Peter's preaching on that occasion and carried it afterwards to the districts where they resided.

But from our epistle itself it is evident that Peter regards these to whom he writes, not as converts of his own, but as

THE FRUIT OF THE LABOURS OF OTHERS ;

mainly, as we may learn from Acts, of those of Paul and his fellow-workers. In ch. 1. 12 he writes in the third person of "THEM that have preached the gospel unto you" ; in 2 Peter 3. 2, R.V., he speaks of them as "YOUR APOSTLES" ; and in verse 15 of the same chapter he alludes to epistles that had been written to his readers by Paul. Moreover, the manner in which he gives his commendation to Silvanus or Silas at ch. 5. 12, and makes

him the bearer to them of the epistle, is in keeping with the fact that this brother had been Paul's partner in the work in some of the districts to which Peter was sending him.

Not only does 1 Peter name the localities to which it was in the first instance to be sent, but it is also the only one of this group of epistles to indicate where the author was at the time of writing it. The salutation in ch. 5. 13 from "the church that is at Babylon" implies that Peter was himself there; and though some would have it that he uses this name as a symbolic one for Rome, it is far more probable that he was in the literal city of Babylon. As has been pointed out by others, and as may be verified on a map, the order in which the provinces are mentioned in ch. 1. 1 is that in which they would present themselves to the mind of one resident eastward in Babylon, and not that which would occur to one writing from Rome in the west.

The use of the phrase "sojourners of the Dispersion" in ch. 1. 1 R.V. might suggest that only Jewish believers were in Peter's thoughts, since the term "Dispersion" was a usual one for Jews residing in foreign lands. In the New Testament it occurs, besides here, only in John 7. 35 and James 1. 1. But that

GENTILES ALSO WERE ADDRESSED

is evident from such passages as ch. 1. 14; 2. 10, etc., and especially from the R.V. rendering of ch. 3. 6, "Sarah, whose children ye NOW are," and of ch. 4. 2, 3, "That ye . . . wrought the desire of the Gentiles." It would appear, therefore, (and the words quoted from ch. 3. 6 would confirm this), that Peter looks upon the saved Gentiles as having become part of what Paul calls "The Israel of God," and that so viewing them, he includes them also among "the elect, who are sojourners of the Dispersion."

At the time when this epistle was written by Peter, there are one or two features in it which throw some light on that question. The persecutions of which we read in the period covered by Acts were, with at the most, two exceptions, instigated by the Jews; and the exceptions, at Philippi and Ephesus, were stirred up by men whose trade was affected by the work of the gospel preachers. The Roman authorities of that period had no animus against Christians as such; and some charge of conduct that was disorderly had always to be trumped up, in order to induce them to take action. But there

came at length a time when the authorities themselves began to dread what the outcome would be of the spreading of this new religion ; and this brought on

A SERIES OF OFFICIAL PERSECUTIONS,

which, starting in the latter part of the reign of Nero, continued at intervals during the first three centuries of the Church's history. Now, it is clear from many expressions used in our epistle that it was written just as this state of things was beginning. The apostle forewarns the saints of "the fiery trial" just about to come upon them, in which they would be called on to suffer for the very "name" of Christian (see ch. 4. 12, 16, R.V.). Paul had possibly already been put to death ; Peter himself was looking forward to the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy concerning him, recorded in John 21. 18, 19 ; and one main purpose of his writing, though not as we shall see the only one, was to cheer and encourage the saints in view of the fierce storm of persecution soon to burst upon them.

In this connection it is of interest that the Greek word "pascho" (suffer) occurs no less than twelve times in 1 Peter, which is twice as often as in any other book of the New Testament ; while its noun form "pathema" (suffering) occurs four times, also oftener than in any other. Even more interesting is the fact that the sufferings of Christ are mentioned seven times, in varied connections, but always with an underlying thought of encouragement for other sufferers. The references are :

Ch. 1. 11 :

"Testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ."

Ch. 2. 21 :

"Suffered for us, leaving us an example."

Ch. 2. 23 :

"When He suffered, He threatened not."

Ch. 3. 18 :

"Suffered . . . that He might bring us to God."

Ch. 4. 1 :

"Suffered . . . arm yourselves with the same mind."

Ch. 4. 13 :

"Ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."

Ch. 5. 1 :

"I . . . a witness of the sufferings of Christ."

(To be continued)

The Person and Programme of the Holy Spirit

by SAMUEL JARDINE, Belfast.

THE SPIRIT IN THE BELIEVER

A WIDE field of rewarding investigation opens to us as we study the Spirit's work in the believer. This includes the miracle of His regeneration, the blessedness of His habitation and the extent of His operation.

1. THE MIRACLE OF HIS REGENERATION (John 3. 3-10)

Regeneration is that act of the Spirit by which He imparts God's life to the soul, thus transferring the new-born one into the Kingdom of God. Hence the insistence by the Lord Jesus of this great primary necessity to "the Teacher of Israel;" "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born . . . of the Spirit is Spirit." The simplest definition of "God's Kingdom" is "the realm of God's rule." But the natural man is a rebel against God, and so a citizen of an alien empire. Man's paramount need, therefore, is to be brought under the dominion of God's will. Man, however, can provide no preparation from within himself to enter that sphere. Christ's words to Nicodemus are staggering if rightly comprehended: "that which is born of the FLESH IS FLESH." A man's nature as received by natural birth can only produce after its kind and that kind is wholly depraved and degenerate and "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8. 7). The flesh, that is, unregenerate human nature, is incapable of producing after the Spirit. Nicodemus—with all his wealth, religion, ancestry and education—is thus classed with the darkest Gentile sinner, requiring this spiritual birth which alone fits for the family of God and for "the realm of God's rule". Our Lord made clear that in this great miracle of regeneration there were both Agent and Instrument: the Agent being the Holy Spirit, the Instrument, mentioned symbolically as "water", being the Word of God (Eph. 5. 26). It is He who applies the enlightening, cleansing and quickening power of the

Word of truth to the unregenerate mind. Here is the greatest event that can occur in any individual's earthly life: being brought from death to life; the child of wrath and disobedience becoming a child of God, a rebel and alien becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of God. (John 5. 24; 1 John 3. 1; Colossians 1. 12, 13).

We are not required to understand this miracle: just to experience it. Note the unsophisticated terms that tell how it may be known: "He came unto His own (things) and His own (people) received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were BORN, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1. 11-13, R.V.). "Received Him"—does that present a difficulty or a theological intricacy? Hardly! You can receive Him, you can rest on this assurance that you have the right of sonship, the authority to be a child of God.

The outcome of your reception of Christ is explained in this passage both negatively and positively. "Born, not of blood"; that is, not by the physical birth that brought you into this world. "Born . . . not of the will of the flesh"; that is, not by any personal resolution or mere reformation. "Born not . . . of the will of man"; that is, no outside human agency, however good or holy, however well-intentioned can assist you to enter the family of God. "But of God"; here is the origin of life on any plane and the absolute source of spiritual or eternal life. As the sinner trusts the Lord Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit breathes God's own life into the soul who there and then becomes a child of God. (John 3. 14, 15).

Although the second birth is as inexplicable as the wind, its effects are quite as evident. "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The blessed Master uses a fitting emblem to indicate to the seeking Pharisee the spirituality and reality of the Spirit's work of regeneration. The unseen wind is evident by its effects and where Christ has been received the manifestation of the Spirit—imparted life will soon be in evidence. The sovereign rule of God will be initiated and a growing measure of submission to it will be expressed. Sin will become abhorrent. Christ will become precious. God's people will become the associates of the newly born one. God's Word will have a new and governing influence on life and conduct. The

absence of such signs makes it doubtful whether the breath of God has ever been vitally active in that life.

2. THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS HABITATION

Contrary to much erroneous teaching current in some evangelical circles, the Scriptures indicate clearly that the Holy Spirit is given to ALL BELIEVERS immediately and unconditionally. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having BEGUN in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3. 2, 3). "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4. 6). "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8. 9). "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God?" (1 Cor. 6. 19). Could language be more explicit that the hearing of faith brings the Spirit of God into the life as the beginning of the work of grace, as the proof of family relationship and as constituting the believer's body the dwelling and temple of the Spirit? There can be no such thing as a Christian devoid of the Spirit: there are no empty temples in this economy of grace. Let this fact be once grasped in all its sublime and hallowing influence and the child of God can never be quite the same again. With all their marks of unspirituality the Corinthian Christians were yet regarded as possessing the Spirit. Their trouble was that the Spirit was not possessing them. There is far too often an absence of an appropriating faith that makes this glorious indwelling a precious and practical reality leading inevitably to dependence upon the Indweller and conformity to His character and ways.

Over one hundred years ago, Dr. Octavius Winslow penned these striking and appropriate words: "The doctrine of the personal INBEING of the Spirit has been reduced to a mere poetical conception. Assimilation of the Character and disposition of the Spirit in that which is amiable, sympathizing and generous has been made to take the place of an ACTUAL and PERSONAL RESIDENCE of the Holy Ghost." This watering down of an important truth so ably exposed by Dr. Winslow is damaging to Christian experience and opposed to the scriptural view that the Spirit Himself indwells the believer thus endowing and enriching him in everything needful for life and service.

(To be continued)

REVIEW by the EDITOR

A NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

General Editor : G. C. D. Howley.

Contributing Editors : F. F. Bruce ; H. L. Ellison.

Obtainable from Messrs Pickering and Inglis Ltd. Price 50/-.

I HAVE on my desk, lying side by side, two very interesting publications, the "Witness" dated January 1970 and the "New Testament Commentary".

The "Witness" bears the caption "100 years" and we gladly congratulate the publishers for maintaining the magazine for such a long period. We join with many others in thanking God for the help His people have received from its pages during the changing years of the past century.

The "New Testament Commentary" whose general editor is G. C. D. Howley is an excellent typographical production, a worthy addition to the many excellent volumes Messrs, Pickering and Inglis have produced in the past.

Two of these were "The Church—A Symposium" edited by J. B. Watson and "The Faith—A Symposium" edited by F. A. Tatford. They set forth, broadly speaking, what were the basic beliefs of those Christians who gather in assembly fellowship. The articles were contributed by men who were gifts to the Church, ministers of the Word of God who were recognised, esteemed and loved by the saints of God.

This new commentary however has as its contributors men, many of whom are almost unknown amongst the Lord's people. They appear to be chosen for their academic ability rather than their spiritual gift and usefulness amongst God's people. The page headed "List of Contributors" seems most impressive. Three of these dear men seem somewhat cold and bare with only the designation "Bible Teacher and Convention Speaker", while some others feature Degrees and qualifications which are by no means Theological. These things, however, are really unimportant, what counts is spiritual gift, which is an entirely different thing to academic qualification. It is surely "the power and not the presence" of the men that is of vital importance.

We wonder on what basis the selection was made, and why some outstanding names among us were excluded. How could the Editor envisage a commentary of this character without such names as E. W. Rogers, Andrew Borland, M.A., W. F. Naismith, A. Naismith, M.A., J. R. Rollo, M.A., J. M. Davies, Dr. F. A. Tatford, Dr. J. Heading, J. H. Large, C. Hocking, Dr. D. W. Gooding, Dr. J. Boyd and others. Among this list you have not only some outstanding scholars, but you have

men of proven ability to handle Divine truth who have for years given acceptable ministry amongst God's people. For sound exposition both of Prophecy and Church Truth these men would have been safer guides of God's people than some of those who have been included.

On the front cover of the "Witness" already mentioned there are photographs of successive Editors of the magazine—Donald Ross, J. R. Caldwell, Henry Pickering, J. B. Watson and G. C. D. Howley. Would it not be true to say that the past Editors believed in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of all true believers. They also believed that the period of forty-two months or one thousand, two hundred and sixty days referred to the closing three and a half years of Gentile Domination, commonly termed "The Great Tribulation" period which would immediately precede the appearing of Christ in power and great glory. They believed in a future for Israel as a nation in their own land with their Messiah reigning in their midst. They believed that there was a distinct difference between Israel and the Church, with the blessings of one earthly and the other heavenly. They believed, too, that in spite of failure the assemblies of God's people were right in their way of gathering, and that their practices were in accord with the Word of God. Furthermore, these men of God were willing to defend both the assemblies and the truths for which they stood; truths which are still most surely believed among us.

But what of the "New Testament Commentary". In many places it does not clearly discern between the Rapture and the Appearing, or Israel and the Church, between the Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord. Many of the passages that are generally accepted in the assemblies as referring to the future are interpreted as belonging to the apostolic and post apostolic days of the Church period. It also teaches that women should engage in audible public worship and spoken ministry in assembly gatherings. It hints at the regular payment of a spiritual teacher in a local assembly and it also seems to give support to the idea of someone holding a "monarchic" position in a local company of God's saints.

Herein we submit lies the tragedy of it all. In the year when the "Witness" celebrates its Centenary, the "New Testament Commentary" edited by the present Editor of the "Witness", teaches so much that is not in accord with the beliefs of the previous Editors of that worthy magazine, and indeed so much that is not believed nor would it be tolerated by the majority of those in assembly fellowship.

(To be continued)



PLAIN TRUTHS ABOUT BRETHERN

by the late HENRY PICKERING

1. Let it be clearly asserted that they have never taken nor officially owned the title "Brethren" as applied only to themselves; but always meant to include "those who in every place call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus, theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1. 2).

2. Because the family idea was ever strong they have been accustomed to speak of each other as "brother" and of fellow-believers in other lands as "our brethren in Australia," etc. This largely accounts for the branding of the term "**Brethren.**"

3. A few novices in Assemblies may use the term in a party sense. Soldiers during the great War, under stress at times, labelled themselves "Brethren," as some name had to be taken, and they disliked the terms "Socialist" or "Atheist". Ministers and others in denominations, thinking of these independent communities class them as "Brethren" or "Plymouth Brethren," not always meaning any slight thereby. But these are in no sense "official" or a party acknowledgment.

4. The movement (using a word distinguishing yet not separate) was begun in the greatest simplicity, with the sole thought of practising what is taught in the New Testament, without any thought of a movement, a party, a sect, and certainly without either hope or desire for the development which has followed.

5. Two things prove the truth of this statement. (1) No one can fix the exact date, even the year, when it may be said to have begun. 1825 and 1830 are both given in history by friend and foe. (2) No one can say the place of origin. Although commonly called "Plymouth Brethren" (ever regarded as a nickname) because the largest Assembly (numbering over 1000) was there and the best known leaders in early days taught there. If precedence of time were counted they had better be termed "Dublin Brethren", or if missionary interest be considered "Demerara Brethren" would be also correct, for we believe a company met there almost simultaneously with those in Britain. It is known that a few believers met in Italy about the same time as those in Dublin, and it may be, even before Demerara. Spontaneity has ever been a mark of any Spirit Movement, it certainly was a mark of this, as is demonstrated by something like 10,000

Assemblies to-day in many and various parts of the earth.

6. And this has been accomplished: (1) without any one man being recognised as the founder, head or main leader; (2) without any headquarters, central office, central fund, or organisation (in the usual sense of the word) in any way; (3) Probably what is most significant and important: Without any written or human creed, catechism, code of laws, book of sermons or prayers, judicial decrees, or anything human bearing on doctrine, practice, or discipline; (4) They have 3 principal and 8 or 10 different hymn books, each company using what they best prefer. **Only one book being common to all—THE BIBLE.** The expression, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible," being literally put into practice and accepted by all. The one and final appeal being: "What saith the Scriptures?" (Romans 4. 3). That settles all disputes, guides in all matters, and is found more satisfactory than all the Councils, Courts, Laws, and Devices of even good men.

7. On this basis they have no Pope, no President, no Salaried Officials, no Revs., no women preachers, no collections from unsaved or outsiders. They have Gospel Preachers, Bible teachers, Pastors (not the pastor), Deacons, elders, guides, and any "office" found in Scripture. Every believer (old and young, poor or rich, white or coloured) being a "priest" unto God, with immediate access in the Holy Presence at all times and in all places, they acknowledge no human or ordained **priesthood.** The common but unscriptural distinction of "clergy and laity" they strenuously decline to admit.

(Extract from the "Witness", October, 1938).

Notes by the Committee

We would ever remember the mercies
Which encircled us all the year long,
And thankfully show forth the praises
Of Him Who's our strength and our song.

One thing amongst many that the people of God could always thank Him for is the fact that He is a **MERCIFUL** God. He saved us by His grace to serve Him, but, because our service at best is so liable to failure, we continually need His **MERCY.** For Israel, following their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and brought out to serve the Lord, God promptly spoke to Moses of a **MERCY SEAT** where, He said, "I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee" (Ex.

25. 22). For us He has provided a throne of grace, to which He invites us to come boldly "that we may obtain MERCY" (Heb. 4. 16). We thank the Lord for this, and we trust we shall ever praise Him Whose MERCIES encircled us all the year long.

A year ago, believing it to be the will of the Lord, we increased the magazine by four pages. Costs and postages, as expected, continued to increase, but we are glad to record our liabilities have all been met and the circulation of the magazine increased during this past year. We gladly praise our God for all that He, in His mercy, enabled us to accomplish.

We warmly thank all those who remembered us in their prayers regularly throughout the year, and we shall esteem the continuance of this fellowship throughout 1970, in the will of God.

Our sincere gratitude is offered to those who devotedly used their pens to submit suitable ministry, which has profited the Lord's people, as many letters reveal.

To those who so kindly assist in distributing the little paper we offer our hearty thanks, and to all those assemblies and individuals who so freely contributed to the costs of publication we again express our appreciation. The magazine is an example of the fellowship of the people of God in various lands. For this we praise the Lord.

Our editor merits our special thanks for his honorary services rendered so wisely and courageously in these days of confusion and so much departure from God and His Word. We value very highly his help, given so unstintingly in the midst of his many other activities for the Lord. One regret expressed by some of our readers is that we obtain so little of his own writing. We endorse this, and hope he will be able to let us have more from his own pen in future, in the will of the Lord.

NEW READERS might kindly note this magazine is sent post free on request. The quantity required can be amended at any time of the year. Where possible, please endeavour to obtain supplies through the assembly parcel. Bulk despatch saves costs. Kindly avoid waste at all times. Please assist us by submitting names and addresses in BLOCK LETTERS and advise changes of address with postal codes promptly. Some back numbers are still available on request, post free. Please do all you can to introduce the magazine to your local assembly and to all the people of God.

"Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified" (2 Thess. 3. 1, R.V.).

Let good or ill betide, all must be good for me ;
Secure of having Thee in all, of having all in Thee.

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