



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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Love Divine, Thou all-consuming passion
Scorch the dross, the impure in my heart,
Purify my gold, refine and fashion,
Enter in and cleanse and keep each part.

Let ambition unallowed be hindered,
Check the first desire for graceless fame,
Unalloyed, my purposes be tendered,
All my hope of gain be in Thy Name.

Disappoint me Lord, in all earth's treasure,
Circumcise the heart that woos the mean,
Lure and hold, Thou Lover without measure,
Twine my heart's affection round Thee,
keen.

Grieve me Lord, if that way means completion,
Grace for grief is always in Thy will,
Bruiséd self doth minister rich blessing,
Press, my Lord, if need, press harder still.

Lead toward fruition, though thro' danger,
Touch, though touching, Thou must bruise
to heal,
Shrunken sinews teach of love, not anger,
Present loss bespeaks eternal weal.

The Person and Programme of the Holy Spirit

by SAMUEL JARDINE, Belfast.

THE SPIRIT IN THE BELIEVER

(Continued)

An outstanding value of the Spirit's residence in the believer is emphasized for us in Ephesians 1. 13-14:

"In whom ye also (have trusted) having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also having believed ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory" (N.T.).

The salvation here referred to has its origin in the loving heart of the Father, it has its basis in the redemptive work of the Son, but it has its eternal security and present enjoyment in the presence in every believer, Jew or Gentile, of the Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph. 1. 3, 7, 13-14). The sealing of the Spirit is the immediate accompaniment of trusting the Lord Jesus. "Upon believing" it has been rendered, "Ye were sealed." Attention has been drawn to the significant fact that Ephesus and Corinth were both sea-board cities which had considerable commerce in timber in Paul's day. Merchants were wont to go up into the hinterland where the trees were grown, cut down and prepared for sale. When a deal was made the purchaser put his special mark upon the logs which were then floated down the river to the sea-port at Ephesus or Corinth and later the Owner would come and identify the property he had bought by the seal he had put upon it. All this beautifully recalls the purchase-price, the sinner's trust, the Owner's seal and the final claim of the property when the river of life has been negotiated.

"Sealing" in the scriptures has a number of lessons but security by ownership is the most important. Here are a few instances:—

- 1st. The sealing of an important document Esther 3. 12; 8. 10. Royal authority emanating from the King's own signet ring ensured either death or life.

- 2nd. The sealing of a cruel and destructive prisoner. Rev. 20. 1-3. Satan held in divine quarantine for a thousand years.
- 3rd. The sealing of an important scroll. Rev. 5. 1 and 5. The counsels of God are only available to the Mighty Overcomer, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4th. The sealing of a saved people. Rev. 7. 1-8. "The bondmen of our God", the saved of Israel on the earth, between the stages of the Lord's coming are immune from danger or hurt by virtue of divine ownership and identification mark.
- 5th. The sealing of every redeemed one in this age of grace and the Church (Eph. 1. 13-14; 2 Cor. 1. 21-22). Our blessed Redeemer has put a living brand-mark upon each of His own, the presence in each of the "Holy Spirit of promise". Some, strangely enough, it seems to me, have related the descriptive words, "of promise" to the past rather than to the future. The words accord far more accurately with the effect of the Spirit's presence on the Christian's life and future safety and blessedness. The inliving Person is the unbreakable seal of present and future security as well as the guarantor of all that is laid up for us in our joint-inheritance in Christ.

The Apostle carefully preserves the balance between our standing in Christ and our state day by day, in this Ephesian epistle. When in 4. 25-29 he prohibits dishonesty, loss of self-control and the impure and unprofitable use of the tongue, he adds these significant words, "AND grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye have been sealed unto the day of redemption." These words take nothing from security but add tremendously to responsibility. He may not be "grieved away" but He can be grieved within the Christian. Here is a tribute to the holiness of the Spirit in that He is sensitive to all that is unclean, unrighteous and certainly to what hurts and harms all others also sealed by Him unto the day of redemption: the bitterness, wrath, anger and lack of forgiveness towards children of God, here enumerated. (Eph. 4. 31-32). Is there a child of God who has not known, at some time in his career, the desolating sense of having in some way grieved the Spirit of God and the need for confession, forgiveness, cleansing and it maybe some restitution or adjustment before "the Dove of Peace" again sang sweetly in the breast?

The Sealing Spirit is further said to be "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The inspired writer does not hesitate to add another emblem to that of "the seal" to fill out the great truth he is seeking to inculcate. "The Earnest" was intended to show that the inheritance of saints is to be enjoyed in part on earth and 'in toto' at the coming of Christ. That is one way of saying that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the first instalment of what awaits us in fulness in glory. The Scottish 'arles' was to the engaged or hired servant the confirmation of the engagement and the assurance that the agreed wage would later be forthcoming. In the smaller sum paid at the 'hiring fair' he had the EARNEST of the larger. The people of Israel could visualize "the good land and a large", "a land flowing with milk and honey", when they examined the "branch with one bunch of grapes" and the pomegranates and figs brought by the spies from the valley of Eschol. But all illustrations come short of the reality which is a living person whose functions give us "heaven on the way to heaven." He who has taken up residence in our regenerated spirits and made our bodies "temples of God" begets the capacity for spiritual things. As 1 Cor. 2. 12 has it. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God: that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God." In this Spirit-given ability it is possible to enjoy communion with God, to know the preciousness of the Lord Jesus and to feast on the Word of God. All holy exercises of worship, thanksgiving and prayer stem from this great fact. The words of Harriet Auber are as apt as they are beautiful:—

"And His that gentle voice we hear
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each fault,
That calms each fear
And speaks of Heaven.
And every virtue we possess
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone."

Other two references to the "Earnest of the Spirit" occur in the second letter to the Corinthians and as might be expected in a very practical setting. In 1. 22 it is mentioned in conjunction with the anointing and the seal of the Spirit. "Now He which stablisheth us, with you, in Christ and hath anointed us is God; who hath also sealed us and given us the Earnest of the Spirit in our hearts". It is evident that the Apostle found the gracious

ministry of the Spirit a strengthening factor when his absence from Corinth was being interpreted as a failure to keep His promise. In chapter five and verse five the second reference to "the Earnest of the Spirit" has as a background the impending dissolution of "the fragile vase of clay"; the believer's body. The reality of death is carefully weighed against the facts of immediate absence from the earthly tabernacle and the presence of the believer with his Lord, as well as the ultimate "clothing upon" of the redeemed personality with "the house which is from Heaven", when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life." No better instance of the distinction between natural death and the coming of the Lord Jesus to fulfil the blessed hope of all Spirit-indwelt people, is available to us than this.

There is another similar and related descriptive expression in Romans 8. 22-23, "the first-fruits of the Spirit". Mr. W. E. Vine, M.A., in his 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words' says of this, "The term is applied in things spiritual (a) to the presence of the Holy Spirit as the first-fruits of the full harvest of the Cross." So that a succession of most suggestive sentences in Romans 8 are tied up with the redemption wrought for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Note them: "The glory which shall be revealed in us". "The Manifestation of the sons of God". "The glorious liberty of the children of God". "Waiting for the adoption (i.e. SONSHIP in perfect maturity)". "Conformed to the image of His Son". (8. 18, 19, 21, 23, 29). This is a brief summary of the harvest and something of what was entailed in the "travail of His soul." It is the work of the Spirit to beget within us "the groan" of longing for relief from mortality and of desire for the glorified or "spiritual body."

This, then, beloved Christian, is the Lord's means of giving you and me immediate enjoyment of our inheritance in Christ; a partial experience of the joys that await us, and motions, Spirit-begotten, that quicken desires for the perfect state. Such thoughts seem to have inspired the words of J. N. Darby,

"Light divine surrounds thy going ;
God Himself shall mark thy way ;
Secret blessings, richly flowing,
Lead to everlasting day.

In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found ;
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound.

There no stranger God shall meet thee ;
Stranger thou in courts above !
He, who to His rest shall greet thee,
Greet's thee with a well-known love."
(To be continued)

The Epistle to the Philippians

THE EPISTLE OF SACRIFICE AND JOY

(Continued)

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES

Chapter 2.

CHRIST is here seen as the believer's pattern, but first Paul exhorts them in a very tender way. There is comfort in Christ, the word used for the Holy Spirit "the Comforter", the One called alongside to help. "Consolation" is a closer, more tender word and stands here in connection with love (how the Lord Jesus in the upper room consoled His disciples because of His coming departure; they did not console Him) then tender mercies and compassions, and on such a basis he exhorts in a fourfold way, to likemindedness, love, oneness in accord and oneness of mind. Were they being tempted to "other-mindedness"? It seems so from further references. There is to be no other kind of "strife" (see 1. 27). Vain-glory is only again mentioned at Gal. 5. 26. He is about to speak of the glory attained through the lowliness of Christ. There is no other way. Christ had taught this when He was here. The cross exemplified it. "Lowliness of mind" is not to be found in Greek before the New Testament. To them it would be regarded as a defect of character indicating lack of courage.

To esteem others better than themselves is to be the normal attitude. It does not of course indicate any such attitude towards the sinning saint except in trying to deal with him. A proud Diotrophes must be rebuked, but even this can be in love and grace.

And now the great central theme comes into view, the Great Exemplar—Christ. Doctrine and practice are not to be divorced.

These sentences are not given to us merely to set forth the doctrinal truth of the Deity of Christ, although they do that and in dealing with this, most forget or ignore the opening sentence, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The truth is being brought out for a specific and practical purpose. It is thus bounded

before and behind with exhortations (vv. 1-4 and 12-16), but how rarely do we hear of these? The central theme should not be taken out of its context. This theme of the example of Christ does not allude to the sacrifice or blood of Christ, but it is intended to inculcate humility.

This sevenfold self humbling is brought before us and also the sevenfold glorification consequent upon it. Seven steps down and seven steps up to the higher heights. Though it is not our purpose to expound in detail this most wonderful scripture yet we must point out one or two things. The word "form" in v. 6 is not the same as the Greek word for "likeness" or "fashion" in v. 8. The former does not imply that He was merely in outward form and not truly God but the very reverse. He was and is God "being in the form of God" and can never be other than that nor less than that, but that God has "form", which is denied to-day, is here stated and that form in which He was ever seen was the Lord Jesus, even in His pre-incarnation. The same word "form" as applied to His being in the form of a servant expressly says that He "took", not that He ever was that. That external display of Godhead glory the Lord did not retain, He did not grasp it to retain it, but relinquished it. He was, and is, equal with God, and can never be less than that but He "emptied Himself" not of Deity for that were impossible, He could never cease to be what He was, and it is not His outward reputation which is in view but the laying aside, for the time being of the outward display of that glory. (He requested the Father to restore it in John 17), He did not regard it of value in view of what He was (and we were) to gain thereby. He never was a "slave" but He took that form and was made, for the time being, in the likeness of men. How careful the Holy Spirit is when He comes to describing the Lord Jesus and we should be also. (See also Rom. 8. 3).

Being found thus He took another step down "He humbled Himself" and although He is here seen as our pattern, let us here say He did not humble Himself as we have to do, for there was not any pride to be overcome in so doing, as there is with us. The very steps He took were humbling because they were not commensurate with His dignity and glory. "Obedient unto death" was a tremendous stoop, for death, the great enemy, could not touch Him, it had no claim upon Him, and crucifixion at that!

"He that is hanged is accursed of God" and also of

man. This ignominy and public shame the Son of God voluntarily suffered. It was the Roman form, after scourging of cruelly putting to death and making a public exhibition for reviling. The Jewish method was by stoning but the Roman by crucifixion, but not for a Roman, it was too degrading and vile, therefore "EVEN the death of the cross" were words used to denote this most extreme form of suffering. Paul as a Roman citizen could not be crucified but he knew the "power of it." That is why the preaching of the cross was so abhorrent to Jew and Gentile alike, to the one a stumbling block, to the other foolishness but to us

Because of this God has highly exalted Him, which is a compound expression of greatness, a character of Paul's epistles, and has given Him a Name which is above every Name. The name Jesus was a very common one among Jews, but not after the cross, it was avoided thenceforth even though it meant "Jehovah the Saviour". Saul of Tarsus had been that way, hating the very mention of that Name and wanting to obliterate it, but he now gloried in it. That Name ultimately every knee and every tongue shall acknowledge, that He is Lord.

In Colossians universal reconciliation is spoken of, but there it is confined to things in earth and heaven, here subjection is spoken of, not reconciliation, and this is to be universal. ALL will have to acknowledge Jesus, the rejected, despised and crucified One, as LORD to the glory of God the Father, whom He always pleased and whose will He always carried out. (To be continued)

Mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens

by the late WALTER SCOTT.

Matthew 13.

THE WOMAN AND THE LEAVEN

(Verse 33)

THE fourth parable is that of the leaven. It is the Kingdom of the heavens in another aspect. It is not so much persons as doctrine that is in question here. It is the introduction of, and wide-spread doctrine which is the point in the parable, as catechisms, articles of faith, formularies, in which doctrines and truths of Scripture are presented as dogma, mixed with error and corrupted, more or less, through the human channel. It is an impossibility to preserve the truth in its integrity as God

gave it, when reduced, cut up, and arranged as a human standard, and compendium of Christian doctrine. When certain truths are divorced from their context, they lose their power and freshness and become mere dogma, lifeless, and defective. We want the truth as God gives it, and where God gives it in His own Word—the Sacred Scriptures. It is a total mistake to take leaven as meaning the gradual extension of the truth or gospel amongst men. Leaven, in the Word of God, not once means good, but always evil; thus, we are told to “beware” of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16. 6-12). Beware of good! That sounds strange, does it not? Again, “Purge out the old leaven” (1 Cor. 5. 7). “Purge out” what is good! Surely not. Leaven was to be excluded from all the fire-offerings of the Lord (Lev. 2. 11). There was one marked instance of the use of leaven, and the exception proves the rule, that in all cases it means evil. Fifty days after the presentation of the firstfruits to God—that is, Christ risen from the dead—two loaves “baken with leaven” (Lev. 23. 17) were to be offered. Surely this unmistakably points to the presentation of the Church in her actual state at Pentecost (Acts 2. 1), on the fiftieth day after Christ rose from the dead. Ah! it is but a day-dream of men—a fancy, without a tittle of Scripture to support it—that this parable of the leaven signifies a universal diffusion of the Gospel among the masses of the people.

Neither reformation of doctrine nor morals will bring in the new era of peace. The distractions of the Church cannot be healed by any human hand. Doctrines more corrupt than ever, are surely spreading and leavening the great mass of Christian profession. The leaven is working and undermining the public religion of the day. Men by thousands are drifting away from God into a practical infidelity which will culminate in the great apostacy or abandonment of Christianity. As it is, tell us of one distinctive truth of the Bible that is not openly flouted and denied? Corruption of doctrine leads to corruption of morals. If the sources and springs of truth are poisoned, the results are seen in the prevalence of crime. Paul's manner of life was based upon doctrine (2 Timothy 3. 10). Sound doctrine is the basis of good conduct. Principles precede conduct. Christ Himself brought in grace; Christ Himself will bring in the glory. When He comes a second time He will bring the power of the Kingdom with Him, as said the dying thief: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest in (not ‘into’) Thy

Kingdom" (Luke 23. 42). Taught by the Spirit, he was, in point of intelligence, far beyond many. The modern expectation of the Kingdom set up by the conversion of the world and the betterment of the human race, by the well-meant efforts of philanthropists, social reformers, and missionary societies. has not a shadow of support in the Scriptures. These parables absolutely negative such a thought.

Notes on the First Epistle of Peter

by the late Wm. RODGERS

WE have said that one object which Peter had in mind when writing his first epistle, was to encourage and cheer the saints in view of the fiery trial of persecution that was just beginning at that time. Let us now see what forms this encouragement takes in the successive references to the subject in each chapter.

In ch. 1. 6, 7 he directs their thoughts onward to the future, and tells them that the trial of their faith (more precious than that of gold) will be to their "praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In ch. 2. 20-23 he teaches them that a right attitude on their part of patience under suffering is even now "acceptable with God", since it proves that they are following the example of Christ Himself. In ch. 3. 14-17 he suggests that persecution gives them an opportunity to testify the "reason of the hope that is in them," and to make their very adversaries ashamed. In ch. 4. 5, 16-19 he asks them to look upon it as God's chastisement beginning at His "House," and points out that their persecutors will in due time have to give "account" for what they have done. Lastly, in ch. 5. 10 he reminds them that their trial will be only for "a while", and will issue in their being made perfect, stablished, strengthened, and settled.

Throughout all this we can see that Peter, who had himself failed under trial, is carrying out the injunction of his Lord in Luke 22. 32, "When thou art turned again, strengthen thy brethren"; and these passages in which he does so are written, not alone for the benefit of the saints to whom the epistle first came, but for God's tried and suffering people in all succeeding generations.

But there was one aspect of the sufferings which would particularly

AFFECT THE JEWISH BELIEVERS,

whom the apostle doubtless had specially in mind when writing—the scorn and evil-speaking to which they would be subjected by their unbelieving fellow-countrymen; as being renegades from their religion, and as having lost all share in Jewish election and inheritance in the Temple, priesthood, and promises. To such he ministers encouragement suited to their need. He points out to them that it is they who have the true election (1. 2), and the inheritance “that fadeth not away” (v. 4); that they possess what their prophets had been diligently searching after (vv. 10, 11), and what even angels desired to look into (v. 13). He assures them that they themselves are builded together as living stones into a real Temple (2. 5), and have become a real priesthood capable of offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. He gathers together expressions which had a primary application to the nation, and which the nation failed to live up to; and uses them of the Christians. “Ye are,” says he (v. 9), “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” (Compare Exodus 19. 5, 6; Deut. 10. 15; Isa. 43. 21). These and other comparisons with Israel’s experiences, as well as quotations of what God said of them, we should take special note of when reading this epistle; not only on account of the use that is made of them, but because they show how fully stored the apostle’s mind was with the Old Testament writings.

But there are other groups of references besides these to be watched for in Peter’s letters. One that is of special interest is to

THE ACTS AND SAYINGS OF OUR LORD

as recorded in the four gospels. When he restored Peter after his fall, He gave him a threefold commission (John 21. 15-17) to feed His lambs and sheep; and the apostle in seeking to do this seems to lay much stress on what he had seen and heard during Christ’s earthly ministry. “Whom having not seen, ye love,” he says of his readers in ch. 1. 8; and he who had seen Jesus endeavours to set Him before them that they will love Him yet more.

His mention of the prophets in ch. 1. 10 as deeply interested in the times of the Messiah, and in the great salvation He was to bring, is doubtless based on the Lord’s

own words about them in Matt. 13. 17; his exhortation in v. 13, "Gird up the loins of your mind," is almost a repetition of Luke 12. 35; while the somewhat similar injunction of ch. 5. 5, R.V., "Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another," is an evident allusion to the act of Jesus in John 13. 4, 5, to which he himself had taken exception at the time. Similarly, his references to being born again, ch. 1. 23 (cf. John 3. 5); to their being built as living stones upon Christ (cf. Christ's words to him in Matt. 16. 18); to the stone which the builders disallowed, ch. 2. 7 (cf. Matt. 21. 42-44 and his own speech in Acts 4. 11); to men beholding the good works of the saints and glorifying God therefor, ch. 2. 12 (practically a quotation of Matt. 5. 16); to feeding the flock of God, ch. 5. 2 (cf. John 21. 15-17); to Satans' desire to injure them, ch. 5. 8 (cf. Luke 22. 31, 32); to the manner of his own death, 2 Peter 1. 14 (cf. John 21. 18, 19); to the transfiguration, 2 Peter 1. 17, 18 (cf. Matt. 17. 1-9); to dogs and swine, 2 Peter 2. 22 (cf. Matt. 7. 6); these, and others too numerous to mention here, are founded on well known passages and incidents in the gospels. And when he exhorts them to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason"; and to "be sober and watch unto prayer"; 1 Peter 3. 15 and 4. 7; can there be any doubt that the apostle's mind is going back to his own failures in these very matters in the garden and in the high priest's palace? and his earnest desire is that others may not fall into the same snare as he had fallen. (To be continued)

Ye are My Witnesses

by H. C. SPENCE

THE Lord Jesus Christ is the faithful Witness, and the First-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. (Rev. 1. 5). The prophet Isaiah foretells of Him, "Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee" (Isaiah 55. 4, 5).

When the Lord Jesus was before Pilate He answered him and said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice"

(John 18. 37). The Apostle Paul reminds us of the Lord's testimony in 1 Timothy 6. 13 (last clause), "Who before Pontius Pilate **witnessed** a good confession."

In John's Gospel chapter 5 our Lord declares, "There is another that beareth **witness** of Me and I know that the **witness** which he **witnesseth** of Me is true. Ye sent unto John and he bare **witness unto the truth**. But I received not testimony from man, but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater **witness** than that of John: for the works the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear **witness** of Me, that the Father hath sent Me. And the Father **Himself** which hath sent Me, hath **borne witness of Me**" (vv. 32-37).

The Lord has not chosen angels in this dispensation of grace but He has chosen sinners saved by grace. The Lord of glory has not chosen golden vessels "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be **of God and not of us**" (2 Cor. 4. 7), to be **His Witnesses** here in the scene of His rejection. The prophet Isaiah declares, "Let **all** the nations be gathered together and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, 'It is truth'. **Ye are My witnesses**, saith the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43. 9, 10).

Alas, in these days of apostasy there are many false witnesses who claim to be witnesses of Jehovah. But the prophet Isaiah again declares, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8. 20).

In John's Gospel chapter 1 the witness of John is brought before us. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came **for a witness, to bear witness of the Light**, that **all** men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear **witness of that Light**" (John 1. 6-8).

What a challenge the words of the Risen Lord before He was received up into glory are to our hearts in Acts 1. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be **witnesses unto Me** . . . and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (vv. 7-8). Every

Christian is called to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His saving and keeping power and of His love and grace until He comes. Thus we are reminded in Zechariah 4. 6 : "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord". May the Lord enable us by His grace to be faithful witnesses in these last evil days.

Times of Refreshing

A REMINISCENCE AND A CONTRAST

by JOHN RITCHIE

TIMES of revival and refreshing are often prayed for by the saints. Some will ever remember seasons when the river of blessing flowed in its fulness among God's people. These seasons were characterised by a ministry which was pre-eminently full of Christ. The grand cardinal truths of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ, his Heavenly calling and hope, and his separation from the world, on which a race of stalwart saints and devoted servants of God were reared, in bygone days, are little heard of now in the public ministry of the Word. Once upon a time at Conference and other gatherings of saints, these great truths were poured forth, in all their freshness and fulness, from the lips of the Lord's servants, in the power of the Holy Spirit : reviving, refreshing, and stimulating the people of God. Saints who had little opportunity at ordinary times for hearing the Word ministered, wearied for these stated seasons of coming together, and gladly gave up their daily toil, to gather thus with their fellow-saints to hear the ministry of God's Holy Word. Many came long distances, by road, by rail, and sea, to these happy gatherings, and returned to their homes and spheres of service, encouraged and strengthened to endure the toil, and the conflict of life. Weary ones were cheered, fainting ones uplifted, and backsliders were humbled, convicted, and restored.

Over and over again has it been our privilege to share in these hallowed seasons ; to be borne up into the presence of the Highest as on eagle's wings, while listening to the ministry of the Lord's beloved servants, who seemed to stand basking in the sunshine of Heaven, while from their lips flowed streams of grace, and life, and health. O the blessedness, the joy, and the lasting results of these never-to-be-forgotten times. Saints went

forth into the world like giants filled with new wine. Praise was on every lip. The railway carriages rang with the echo, and those who tarried at home, heard for many days, of "the wonderful works of God", until they also caught the flame, and stood up revived, and girded afresh for the battle.

Happily, the loving-kindness of the Lord continues still, and in the experience of all who wait upon Him in humble dependance for blessing, these "refreshing showers" are not withheld. Nevertheless, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that present day Conferences, and gatherings of saints, are not always so. They are too often devoted to other objects than the reviving and refreshing of the saints. The great cardinal truths which formed the staple fare of earlier times are not to the front as once they were. Christ, the Perfect Sacrifice: the Ever-living Priest: The Coming Bridegroom of His People: the Saints' Acceptance in the Beloved: their Place and Portion in Christ, with many other kindred truths, are little heard of now, as once they were. Saints of former times never seemed to weary of them: they were the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. The very mention of them caused their faces to beam with joy, and their lives were beautiful by the unction and fragrance that they yielded.

In many gatherings of the saints of God these great and holy themes have little place in our day. They are politely bowed out, to make room for other matters, supposed to be of more importance. Yet, after hour upon hour has been spent expatiating on these subjects, the saints do not seem to be drawn a bit nearer God. Their faces do not shine as in the days of old. The song of praise at the close lacks its ancient jubilant tone. Nor are the after effects quite the same: for the railway journey back is often spent in noisome debate, on "knotty points", and the fragments that reach the weary ones at home are not of such a nature as to help them to combat sin with a firmer hand, and tread the wilderness with a lighter, livelier step. To those who have never known the palmy days of old, these joyless gatherings may seem to lack nothing: and those who have been all their days but traffickers in barren theories, will be in their element there: while backslidden souls may affect to find in every idle speculation a "path that no fowl knoweth". And the devil, that subtle serpent, will hold his own by blinding with conceit and self-esteem, those whom he has thus securely in his snare, and by causing them to think and say that they, and they only are "the faithful in the land."

But the "ancient men" who have seen the going forth of the Lord, and His mighty arm made bare in the midst of His people, will never rest satisfied until the river of God, in all its fulness, flows down in their midst, carrying life, and health, and refreshing with it. 'Tis this O Lord, that Thy saints are panting and pining for, while they watch and pray: "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may REJOICE IN THEE?" (Psalm 85. 6). Then the mists and clouds, the dull hazy atmosphere, and the depression, so hurtful to the fair garden of the Lord, will pass away, and under the warm beams of Divine Light and Love, the souls of God's people will revive and grow as the lily, and assemblies of saints will be as "a fruitful field which the Lord hath blessed."

REVIEW by the EDITOR (Continued)

A NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

General Editor : G. C. D. Howley.

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THE Commentary still lies on my desk. In these days when the world is growing rapidly worse, professing Christendom fast turning away from God and His Word, the nations of the earth unwittingly moving towards amalgamations that seem to foreshadow events of the end time, when the days are difficult and many a saint is weary, what could more encourage the heart than to be reminded "to look for the Saviour."

Let us see what the Commentary has to say about that soul-thrilling passage—John 14. 2-6. (page 277).

"I will come again'. The final thought here is certainly an eschatological one—the second advent of Christ. But that by no means exhausts what Jesus is saying. Jesus will come again in the Spirit (cf. vv. 18, 21, 23). There is no vacuum between the days of His flesh and the final arrival in the Father's house, even for these, however much arresting delay there is before the completion of the work."

The writer allows us a "final thought"—the second advent ! Is that all he has to say. Thousands of saints have been thrilled as the truth of this passage has been applied by the Spirit to their souls. Congregations of the Lord's people have been sent with lightened tread on their pilgrim journey as they have listened to soul warming ministry. "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Who has not been deeply stirred as they have listened to a gathering of saints in Scotland sing—

“Midst the darkness, storm and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see;
Well I know the blessed morrow
Christ will come for me.”

But this Commentary says so tamely and unconvincingly, “The final thought here is certainly an eschatological one.” This work that is concerned with “the close examination of the text” says nothing relative to this portion that is really helpful. We would like to know what the passage means by 1. My Father’s House (What and where is this?); 2. Many Rooms (What are these?); 3. I go to prepare a place for you (When, how and where?); 4. I will come again (Bodily? Spiritually? at Death? or the Rapture? or “the Appearing?” or “the Last Day?”); 5. Receive you unto Myself (When? How?); 6. Where I am (Well, where?); 7. There ye may be also” (What does this mean?).

All these absorbing questions arise in my mind, but I am left in doubt and one passage that I thought (and still am convinced) referred to the Coming of the Lord and the Rapture of the saints is beclouded by being unnecessarily mixed up with truth enlarged upon in the latter part of the chapter concerning the sending of another Comforter. We submit that verses 18, 21 and 23 are occupied with a subject entirely different from what is found in verses 2 and 3. However the commentator relative to v. 18 says, “Cf v. 3. Jesus possibly refers to the post-resurrection appearances and the Spirit’s advent, as well as to the great day of His coming.” Does anyone really believe that comments of this character are calculated “to help the rising generation to think biblically”?

1 Thessalonians 4. 13-18 contains verses that were meant to comfort sorrowing hearts in early days and they do precisely the same thing to-day, as they state with simple and profound dignity the hope of the Christian to-day. We turn to the Commentary and we are surprised to note that Post-Millennialists and A-Millennialists are given equal place with Pre-Millennialists. Does this commentator have no conviction on this subject? Do these contributors, who are associated with the churches of the “Christian Brethren” (a title we do not acknowledge) not know that those that hold post-millennial and a-millennial views are an extremely small minority whose ministry would not be acceptable in a large number of assemblies and whose beliefs cut across what has been and still is generally accepted in these circles. The commentator proceeds rather pedantically through this glorious passage until he comes to the verse which contains the truth of the Rapture, the distinctive hope of the Church of God:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up, together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

This verse is dismissed thus by the writer : "It is trivial to pander to curiosity by interpreting this verse in a materialistic manner." What does this mean? We notice that he comments on "*In the clouds*" and gives references that link it up with the Appearing, viz., Mark 13. 26; Daniel 7. 13. We quote again, "'to meet' is used . . . of the official reception given to a visiting governor, whom his citizens escort into the city from which they have come to meet him." When one considers the two points dealt with, viz., "In the clouds" (connected by the writer with the Appearing), "to meet" (just enough information given to imply that the Lord's people return to earth with the Lord immediately after meeting Him in the air), one could conclude that 1 Thess. 4. 13-18 is being given a Post-Tribulation interpretation. Has the writer some difficulty with the rest of the verse? Hence he says, "It is trivial to pander to idle curiosity by interpreting this verse in a materialistic manner", and again, "The purpose of this teaching is practical, not the satisfying of idle speculation." Does the Author mean that seeking to know the meaning of the other things stated in this verse, apart from the two parts he has chosen is "trivial", "idle curiosity", "materialistic interpretation", "idle speculation" ?

First let us ask is he right in his assertion re "to meet". I quote from William Hoste, B.A., a man greatly revered amongst the people of God :

"There is nothing in the New Testament phrase, '*eis apantesin*,' to indicate whether those who meet go forward together, or go back together, or stay where they are. This can only be known from the context. In Acts 28. 15, the brethren did quite probably turn back with Paul to Rome, but we are left to deduce it. On the other hand, in Matthew 25. 1 and 6, the only other passage where this exact expression occurs, the reverse it would seem takes place. There is nothing to show that it was not the bridegroom who turned back with the wise virgins to the wedding. Surely, too, the verb "*apanto*," which occurs seven times in the New Testament, would also have this sense, "to meet and come back", whereas it means simply, "to meet", irrespective of what happens afterwards. See e.g., Matthew 28. 9 : "Jesus met them," but did not turn back with them. So too in Mark 5. 2 the demoniac met the Lord, but did not turn back with him ; and so in Luke 14. 31 and 17. 12 ; while in Mark 14. 13 ; John 4. 51 ; and Acts 16. 16, the other would seem the sense. I think it is clear that no such meaning attaches to this phrase as our questioner alleges, and certainly no Grammarian or Commentator, that I can find, e.g., Grimm, Alford, Parkhurst, etc., seems aware of it. Later, the Lord's people do return with Him when He comes in judgment, but AFTER AN INTERVAL. What, indeed, would be the use of their being caught away to return at once ?

Also note in "Kept From The Hour" by G. B. Stanton (p. 254):

"In neither of these Scriptures (Matthew 25. 1, 6; Acts 28. 15) is it clear that they returned *immediately* after meeting. Paul undoubtedly had a time of fellowship with the brethren who came to meet him, before they started for Rome. The Greek word here used means simply a *meeting*, and the cognate Greek verb, *to go to meet, to meet*. Thayer, op. cit., s.v. Indeed in the Textus Receptus reading of Luke 14. 31, and in the LXX text of 1 Sam. 22. 17; 2 Sam. 1. 15; 1 Macc. 11. 15, 68, and in other Greek writers, the thought of a return is impossible. Therefore we affirm that although Christ will return with His own, the language nowhere implies that He will return immediately."

Henry C. Thiessen.

We judge, therefore, that the commentator's argument here is not valid, being without reliable foundation.

But what of the statements that he glosses over, not of course, wanting to satisfy "idle speculation"?—"Caught Up"! Yes, brother, "Caught Up"! Let the thrill of it grip your soul! Caught up!—taken hold of, lifted up, snatched away, Raptured!—but maybe you do not believe in the Rapture. This is the moment for which thousands of the Lord's people wait! One moment here—the next moment gazing upon the Lovely Man who suffered shame and death upon the tree. The One whom having not seen we love! We are going to see Him when we are "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air.

"O the blessed joy of meeting,
All the desert past!
O the wondrous words of greeting
He will speak at last!"

Notice, please, that we are not told that we are to be gathered together from the four winds, by angels, to Jerusalem, this will be the blessed portion of saints who will have passed through Tribulation days. In absolute contrast to them, we are going to be caught away from earth altogether, before the Great Tribulation—our location not Jerusalem—but the air.

We cannot pass this grand word "together". Partings over! Tears wiped away! Loved ones rudely severed by death reunited! "Caught up together with them"—with our loved ones who have been "put to sleep by Jesus". My dear brother and sister, through the mist of tears, bless God, there is a glad morning coming, it draws very near.—There will be reunitions!—No more sorrow, tears, pain, partings or death—reunited for ever. More! reunited in the presence of One whom we worship and adore.

(To be continued)



ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS

by Dr. R. C. EDWARDS, Australia.

PROBABLY the most publicised of all Bible texts on unity is, "All one in Christ Jesus". Is it as well understood as it is publicised? Let us examine it in its context.

Galatians 3. 29 (R.V.) comprises four statements—

"There can be neither Jew nor Greek,
There can be neither bond nor free,
There can be no male and female,
For ye are all one man in Christ Jesus."

Not, "You ought to be", or, "Mind your ways so as to be", but, "ye are"—the language is starkly affirmative. "Ye are all" includes all Christians, despite all defects. It is not something to be achieved. It is a present, accomplished fact. It is deeply to be regretted that apparently thousands of earnest evangelicals treat it, in their ignorance, as if it is a unity to be attained, by disregarding differences for a time and meeting as if they are non-existent. However well-meant, this device is unrealistic.

The word 'man' is not in the Greek. But here the Greek adjective for one is in the masculine gender and man is the best noun to supply after it. The masculine gender is in also in Eph. 2. 15, "to make in Himself of the twain one new man", that is, believing Jew and believing Gentile have lost their distinctiveness and become, in standing before God, one new man of a different order from either. Gal. 3. 28 and Eph. 2. 15 are to be distinguished from verses in which 'one' is neuter, as John 10. 30; 17. 11, 21, 22, 23; 1 Cor. 3. 8; 11. 5; Eph. 2. 14; 1 John 5. 8. Here 'one man' would be quite wrong.

Does "all one in Christ Jesus" pertain to the Christian's practice, experience, walk, testimony or to his position and standing in Christ? Take as a test, "there can be no male and female"—is this in practice on earth or in standing before God? The answer ought to be forthcoming at once. For we all know that in life upon earth there must be male and female whose inherent differences must be allowed scope for functioning. The unity of Gal. 3. 28 must therefore be on the level of our standing in Christ, where all distinctions of all kinds are obliterated—not modified or merged, but completely abolished. For, not only have we been "sanctified by the

offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all", but by the same "one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10. 10, 14). But in our practice we must all admit imperfection. (1 John 1. 8).

The details of the context, Gal. 3. 23 to 4. 8, combine to set forth the present standing of all believers. To give it a modern touch, let us add the words, "whether they share the Keswick outlook or not". For example, the justification by faith of 3. 22, 24 tells of standing before God, not any justification we might have from men. Galatians 3. 26 (R.V.) affirms that "ye are all sons (not 'children') of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus." All believers sons, whether men or women? Certainly, for "sons" here is figurative; it has to do not with sex but with status in Christ. Compare Luke 20. 34, in which sons of this age are said to comprise those who marry, that is, males, and those who are given in marriage, that is, females. Think also of the sons of the bride-chamber, of Matthew 9. 15, who are wedding-guests of both sexes. "Sons" has many figurative usages. Its Galatian background is Roman custom.

The Roman citizen sent his boy to school for about ten years. He then by legal process conferred on him the status of an adult, acclaiming him publicly as son. While a minor, he was under guardians and stewards, slaves. One of these, called in Greek "paidagogos" (Latin "Paedagogus") had the duty of escorting the boy safely to and from school. So while verse 23 describes the law of Moses as a warder shutting up the Jew for protection from Gentile idolatries and immoralities, verse 24 describes it as a child-escort. When the Christ came, these functions of the law were not needed. So Paul's teaching is that believers now are sons of God, not minors as they had been but adults in status in the family of God. The law of Moses was "unto Christ", whom it did not know as Jesus, but the Galatians had rested their faith in Christ Jesus, for the Messiah of the many Old Testament prophecies when He actually came bore the name Jesus, in accordance with Matthew 1. 21. With His advent came a much richer revelation of the mind of God. We have this in the New Testament. In "the fulness of the time" Christ the Son was sent forth by God the Father to give to us believers the place or status of sons. (Adoption of sons in Gal. 4. 5 means the place of sons). Thus believers to-day are dispensationally on a higher level than the great and holy men of old, as

Daniel, Isaiah, and the like. Surely we are meant to know this, to value it, and to respond to it intelligently in holy enlightenment of the mind of God.

Galatians 3. 27 (and Romans 6. 3) may seem to teach that some believers had been baptised and some had not. But the original implies that all had been baptized, not to own Moses as leader (of which 1 Cor. 10. 2 tells concerning the 603,550 citizen-soldiers of Numbers 2. 32; 14. 29) but Christ as Lord from their baptism henceforth. This forward look is inherent in baptism.

The initial acceptance of Christ Jesus is compared here with the putting on of a garment. Passages parallel with Gal. 3. 27 are Eph. 4. 24 and Col. 3. 10, in which this initial acceptance is called the putting on of the new man. Exhortation as to conduct follows in each case.

Galatians 3. 27 calls for a little further reference to Roman custom. The Roman boy, while a minor, wore the garment called the "toga praetexta", of white wool edged with purple. When he was given adulthood he discarded this for the all-white "toga virilis", the man's toga. The toga was for Roman citizens only, not for slaves.

Let us conclude with a few summary statements.

Galatians 3. 28 has to do, not with the practice of the believer, but with his standing. Its unity cannot be demonstrated, revealed, or expressed by anything we can do. This unity embraces all real Christians including those whose manner of living may seem to us to be unsatisfactory. However desirable, amendment of conduct has no effect upon this unity.

The theological professor who stated that Paul desiderated it was in error; Paul categorically affirmed it. When, referring to present fragmentation, he asked why are not Christians all one as Gal. 3. 28 describes them, he failed to understand that we are all one, despite all the unworthy conduct, for the unity of this verse is not one of conduct.

When a certain eminent scholar of world-wide reputation commented that Christians have made but little progress towards attaining the unity of Gal. 3. 28, he revealed that he was misunderstanding this unity, which is not something to be attained. It is a present, accomplished, inviolable unity, a fact in the divine economy, despite all human mistakes, including, for example, those made by truly evangelical Christians during the last one hundred years.

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