



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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BUY THE TRUTH AND SELL IT NOT

To us, Praise God, we have bequeathed,
The Word of Truth, which is God breathed,
Inspired of God, the Living Word,
A gift to guide, the Spirit's Sword.

Let fundamental truth be taught,
Buy the Truth and sell it not,
Integral to the Christian Charter,
Be not deceived, it's not for barter.

The Virgin Birth, let none gain say,
The Sinless Life, let none say nay,
The Atoning Death, for you and me,
He bore the Wrath, to set us free.

He rose again and now He Lives,
Exalted high, yet freely gives,
A pardon, peace and power to save,
Each soul who comes—before the grave.

He's coming soon to take us Home,
"Lord Jesus, Saviour quickly come,"
The Church completely He will bring
Throughout Eternity we'll sing.

Then let us all be up and doing,
Find comfort while the way pursuing,
For worthy to be praised is He,
The Lamb, once slain, All Glory Be.

EDITORIAL

Another year! The circumstances grievous, the last days are upon us, but the "Glory shines before us," the prospect is bright, the hope is certain, the end sure—

"He is coming, the Man of Sorrows
Now exalted on high."

This last decade has evidenced the determination of the adversary in attacking and undermining the Authority of the Word of God, questioning the absolute diety and impeccability of the Lord Jesus, and by the theories of Tribulationism and A-milleniumism robbing the saints of the hope of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. Add to that the fact that there are those among us who are seeking to completely change the character of the assemblies of God, so that instead of conforming to the Scriptures they may conform to the world.

Of course there are super-pessimists who foretell an early demise of the assemblies that they call the "Brethren" and it may be that the particular assemblies with which those good brethren are in fellowship and amongst which they move are declining and unhealthy because of a lack of interest in and obedience to God's word.

All however is not lost! There are encouraging signs almost everywhere. The gatherings of the Lord's people over the New Year season in Scotland and Ireland were a cause for thanksgiving. In Scotland, at almost every conference, the saints reported that the numbers were larger than for many years. The editor addressed two Saturday night meetings in Northern Ireland towards the end of last year—the numbers attending were 500 and 600, a very large proportion being young folk. Even in England things are not bad everywhere. There are places and areas where God's people are realising His presence and blessing, even places where for Bible Readings it is difficult to accommodate all who come. Take heart, my dear brethren and sisters—pray, work, keep close to Him and His word—He will bless! If perchance my readers are in companies that are declining and weak, do not give up! Do not depart from His ways, but cling to the Lord with purpose of

heart. It was when in weakness Jacob could no longer wrestle but only cling he received the blessing. If you find yourselves in companies where the leaders are departing from the right ways of the Lord, put all you can into those things that remain that are according to His word and pray about the rest. He is Lord of His own assembly—trust in Him.

During recent days we have been warning the saints against the things propagated by the speakers at Swanwick. I think we have spent enough time exposing their strange teachings. Three main points are apparent. They are advocating (1) Ecumenism (2) Paid, college trained and man appointed ministry (3) Women's participation in public prayer and ministry. All three are departure from what God's word teaches. I shall return to these subjects on later occasions. Having been warned, my dear brethren, I trust you may be helped to graciously, but very firmly resist those that would introduce these things.

One is reminded of the words of the apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders

“For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of *your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore WATCH and REMEMBER . . . Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace.”

Acts 20. 29-32.

As to the future, there is no doubt days will get darker, things will become more difficult—this is to be the feature of the last days—do not be surprised—but look up! Your redemption draweth nigh. “Hold fast till I come!” “I come quickly.” May the Lord bless all my readers until that long expected, blissful moment dawns.—A.M.S.G.

* * * *

May I thank all who have written me during past months, some agreeing, others disagreeing; but all in a very gracious way. I am afraid there are so many that I could not hope to reply. However I wish to thank you all. May the Lord graciously lead us all back to Himself in personal revival.

NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLIES

A PLEA FOR DIVINE SIMPLICITY

by **ROBERT McCLURKIN**

The great commission of our Lord, the four parts of which are seen in the last chapters of the four gospels, was three-fold : the disciples were commissioned to preach the Gospel and by the truth of the Gospel, to *make* disciples out of all nations ; they were to *mark* disciples in the waters of baptism; and they were to *mold* disciples by the teaching of the whole Word of God.

The Book of Acts reveals how this was carried out. When souls were saved through the preaching of the Gospel, they were baptized and gathered in congregations unto the precious Name of our Lord. The apostles never became pastors over each congregation, but put the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the converts. Then, as soon as possible, they moved on and allowed the faith of the saints to work.

There were three reasons for the planting of New Testament assemblies : **WORLDWARD**, they consolidated the gains of the Gospel and became outposts for the further advancement of the Gospel of Christ.

CHURCHWARD, they were to be places of holy concord where the saints could share their joys and sorrows. They were to be for mutual edification and care and the training ground for the development of spiritual gift and leadership.

GODWARD, they were to be little sanctuaries from which the incense of worship and praise would ascend continually.

By what names are they to be known?

There is one Divine principle that guides us in this. Any name or names that do not embrace the whole, is sectarian. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for factionalism when they said, "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." Each name only embraced each party, to the exclusion of all others.

The Spirit of God points to three serious sins that are committed in assuming unscriptural names : it is a sin against the Person of Christ, "Is Christ divided?" It is a sin against the Work of Christ, "Was Paul crucified for you?" It is a sin against the Name of Christ, "Were ye

baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1 : 12-13). The one Name of our glorious Lord is set over against all other names, as the only Name that can unite the saints in a practical way (v. 10). The truth of gathering in His Name alone means to gather in subjection to the authority of Christ which is enshrined in that Name. There only can true unity be realized.

By what features are New Testament churches to be distinguished?

Let me point out a few.

1. By the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was the centre of the church life of the early saints. It was the hub from which all their activities radiated. Paul, by the Spirit, taught the Corinthians that in the Lord's Supper they expressed a fellowship (10 : 16, 17) ; they proclaimed a fact (11 : 26) ; they remembered a Person (11 : 24) ; and they cherished the hope of the Lord's return (11 : 26).

It is this weekly feast that has preserved the assemblies from the apostacy of the religious world, for in it the Spirit of God interprets the meaning of the Cross every Lord's day.

In the early days of assembly testimony, godly saints recognized that a physical circle was a beautiful symbol of our gathering around our Lord Himself, and of His presence in the midst of His own. The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 formed a physical circle to give us the picture of our Lord in the midst of His own.

But the Devil could not leave these little companies alone. He hates Divine simplicity and Scriptural order. Today some have an obsession to change everything. They seek to push the Lord's Supper into a corner and make it secondary to other things. As other things crowd in, the worship of the saints is disturbed. When the emblems are passed around there is no time for the word of ministry, when the hearts of the saints, melted by the felt presence of the Lord, are ready to receive it. Some assemblies are getting used to going through the procedure without the Word of God being opened at all. This new emphasis has created a restlessness among the Lord's people so that, not infrequently, two or three hymns are given out, one after the other, with no exercise on the part of the brethren to rise up and worship.

The emphasis on the Lord's Supper is only superficial, compared to those early days when it was so precious to the hearts of God's people. A new generation has risen up, with its emphasis on youth and religious entertainment. Yet with all the unbounded activities among the young, there are few that come out with deeper convictions on the things of God and a deeper knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The New Testament church was distinguished as the repository of Divine truth (1 Tim. 3 : 14-16). Truth is embodied in Christ, "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is enshrined in the Scriptures, "Thy word is truth," and entrusted to the church, "the pillar and ground of the truth." A casual acquaintance with the religious world will reveal that, in all, many truths are ignored or denied. Interdenominationalism exposes God's people to the errors of all. The safety of the assemblies lies in their separation. The role of the assemblies is to maintain a simple testimony to the whole truth of God. Only then will they become a haven of rest for weary saints who, when tired of the whole sham and mixture, seek a resting place for their confused spirits.

3. Another mark is the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work. In His sovereignty He imparts gifts (1 Cor. 12 : 11), and in His freedom He uses it as He pleases (1 Cor. 14). In ecclesiastical systems this important feature of the New Testament pattern is ignored. One, only, is recognized with the right to teach and to preach, and that by human ordination. We must insist on the Spirit's unfettered activity in the assembly, if we are to keep to the New Testament order. Here again we must sound the alarm among the people of God. Any professed assembly that appoints one man to be a pastor over them, runs contrary to the Word of God and challenges the sovereignty of the Spirit of God in His own house. Pastors are shepherds and shepherds are overseers. These are appointed by the Holy Spirit and are in the plural in every New Testament church.

4. Another feature of early Christianity was government. Bishops, overseers, pastors, shepherds, elders, are names given to the men who take the oversight in God's assembly. These godly men give leadership to the Lord's people and carry out discipline whenever called for. Christendom is a far cry from this Divine pattern. Some, who never bought the truth, are prepared to sell it for an easy religious life.

They speak now of appointing a pastor for each assembly, meaning of course, that he will become preacher and teacher as well. They are willing to pay a good salary to a man who will do all their work for them. This is not just a change of method; it is an infringement of Divine principles and departure from the truth of God.

Today we have acquired great organizational ability until many godly saints wonder if the Spirit of God will be organized out of business. We are convinced that the Devil is setting up machinery in many companies of the Lord's people that will make it easy for their return to Babylon and be swallowed up in the ecumenical spirit of our age.

5. Another distinguishing mark of the early saints was a faithful presentation of the Gospel. In their preaching sin was exposed, sinners were convicted and God's remedy for sin and the sinner was clearly presented. Assemblies are compared to lampstands to shed the light of truth upon the darkened souls of men. Conversions were accompanied with repentance. Are we producing conversions today without repentance? Are we not too often satisfied with a wishy-washy, sentimental believism? In some places, with a programme of chorus singing and a "hurrah-boy" display, the whole thing is geared to attract only children and imbeciles. Let us "quit ourselves like men and be strong." The dignity of the assembly can only be maintained by an intelligence in the truth of God. The Bible anticipates every age, and if rightly interpreted, is more than a match for its opponents today. Let us establish ourselves in its blessed truths, and with humility and courage, carry the battle to the gate of the enemy. Let us equip our young people with the truth so that they will not be ashamed in the college, the university or in the field of their profession. There is enough religious entertainment in the sects. Let the assemblies become in reality "the pillar and the ground of the truth."

6. Another mark of Divine simplicity was the autonomy of each assembly. Centralization, either of funds, government or teaching, is contrary to what is written. There is a fellowship of assemblies because we are sharers of the whole truth of God. We should refuse to adopt any silly methods in the work of God that would grieve and offend godly saints that are seeking to maintain Divine simplicity. But in government, every assembly stands upon its own

base, responsible to the Lord alone. Therefore we must, in faithfulness to truth, set our faces against any attempt to centralize, whether in teaching, as in a Bible school; or government, as in central oversight; or in funds, as in a missionary society.

Our path then is to walk apart from the religious world. Our aim should be to please our Lord alone and seek to reclaim a knowledge of the truth of God. Then when weary souls, tired of the sham and confusion of Babylon, seek rest, they will find in the assemblies of the Lord's people little "Bethlehems" where there is "bread enough and to spare" without mixture of the notions of men.

THE SPIRIT — AND THE MINISTRY

by J. R. CALDWELL (one-time editor of 'The Witness')

SEE I CORINTHIANS 12. 11.

"The self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will." One may be qualified to preach the Gospel; another to instruct the saints; another to care for and guide the flock. In each case the qualification is of the Spirit, and never could have existed but by the power of the Spirit. Man cannot confer such gifts; neither can they be developed by any amount of theological training. If there be a felt lack of any such gifts in an assembly of the saints, how are they to be obtained? The appeal for them must be made to God alone. It is He, by his manifold grace, who alone can qualify, raise up, and bring forward to the work.

Thus we are taught that for ministry, according to God's thoughts and not man's, we are cast upon the living God Himself. We cannot get on without gifts that are of the Spirit, the direction which is of the Lord, and the operation (or in-working) that is of God. Helpless are we, indeed, if we look to man! But the flesh is ever ready to lean upon man rather than God. Hence how many there are in assemblies who go in and out without any sense of responsibility—professing to look to God, but really counting upon certain brethren to be present and "conduct the service;" much as others count upon the "minister," to whom they surrender all their responsibility. May God give us grace to see that we cannot but fail of blessing, unless each

individual member is in living fellowship with God, and truly subject to the Lord.

"Dividing to each one severally as He will."

Here it is emphatically asserted that these distributions of the Spirit are according to His sovereign will. This is not man's idea. Do not parents often regard "the ministry" just as they would any other "profession?" A father may have three sons. He puts one to "business," one he qualifies for "the law," and the third he makes "a minister." In each case the main object in view is a sufficient and respectable means of livelihood! So whether it be "the law" or "the ministry," the necessary qualification is the university and its appropriate curriculum. This being completed according to man's idea each one is fitted for his particular "profession." God has as little to do with the one as the other.

—from 'The Charter of the Church' published by Messrs. Pickering & Inglis Ltd. in two volumes (see page 172, 173 of Volume 2).

WHITHER GOEST THOU ?

by J. G. GOOD

We are introduced in Acts Ch. 9, to the steps of spiritual progress seen in a new convert, in this instance Saul of Tarsus. The order is significant, 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear' Mark 4-28. Salvation is only the beginning of the work of God in the soul, assembly fellowship should be the end product of all Gospel preaching, having God's glory and our good in view. There can be no doubt that the preaching of the Gospel in the Acts of the Apostles, had the formation of New Testament churches as its goal. The New Testament does not envisage converts left as 'independents' but rather as living stones in a local church, builded permanently in the structure. Eph. 2-22. Can we see in God's dealings with Saul of Tarsus a blue-print for our day and age? Questions are answered which are being evaded today, causing confusion when the question of assembly fellowship arises.

Let us walk with Saul from the Damascus road, to the assembly at Jerusalem, the wonder of it, God in grace intervenes to reach a proud bigoted Pharisee to display the riches of His grace and mercy. The first priority must be in the salvation of the sinner, therefore the first step is ;

CONVERSION (Acts 9-4). The vision and the voice are predominant in the conversion of Saul, both were to be a regular occurrence in his later life. (Acts 16-9, and 27-23). Saul could never forget this conversion experience on the Damascus road, and as life advanced this experience became more of a living reality. 'A light from heaven' (Acts 9-3) 'a great light' (22-6), and finally, 'a light above the brightness of the sun' (26-13). The longer we tread the pilgrim pathway, the more vibrant the chords of eternal life become in the soul, the poet expressed the aspirations of the Christian thus :

'My Father's house on high, home of my soul how near,
At times to faith's fore-seeing eye, Thy golden gates
appear,

Ah, then my spirit faints, to reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints, Jerusalem above'.

Conversion may be the end of a process, but it is a definite act realised immediately (I Thess. 1-9). The vision and the voice are important and necessary in the communion life of the child of God, the Psalmist felt the need for both. (Psalm 28-1 and 143-7). Conversion should lead to consecration, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do' (Acts 9-6) this can only be accomplished when the Lordship of Christ is fully acknowledged and owned.

PRAYER (Acts 9-11). What beautiful words, 'Behold he prayeth,' there is no surer sign of Divine life in the soul than this desire to pray. Again this holy exercise was to mark the apostle throughout his life, prayer was his natural habitat, the assemblies of God's people were a special burden on his heart. We can learn much by reading the prayers of Paul as recorded in his letters, how lofty were his desires, spiritual intelligence being the hallmark of the prayers of Paul. He prays for the saints at Philippi that they may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. (1-9. Paul prays that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of His will. (1-9). Many examples could be cited, showing the deep concern which he had for the spiritual well being of the saints, 'prayeth' not a repetition of well worn phrases, but vital, persistent, heart felt prayer. Is there not a lack of reverence today, when approaching the Throne of Grace, the dignity and privilege of having audi-

ence in the throne-room of Heaven, should have a profound effect on the quality of private and corporate prayer.

BAPTISM (Acts 9-18). This ordinance was commanded by none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28, 19-20). Baptism is not necessary for salvation, but follows on salvation. The outward evidence of an inward work in the soul. This ordinance speaks primarily of the believer's identification with the Death, Burial and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans chapter 6 describes this act as follows, 'baptized into His death' verse 3, 'buried with Him' verse 4, and 'raised up from the dead' verse 4. The practical truth to be 'to walk in newness of life,' this is the truth of conversion, baptism proclaims it, the reality of this change of life, the 'old' man having been crucified, the 'new' man living in the good of resurrection power. The mode of baptism is placed beyond doubt, 'buried with Him' Gr. Baptizo—to dip, immersion, submersion, and emergence. Baptism should not be viewed as a gate-way to the assembly, but as implicit obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, only baptised believers should be received into assembly fellowship.

WITNESS (Acts 9-20). Paul was a zealous man, prior to his conversion, and this feature was exemplified in a distinguished life of service. The same fervour with which he persecuted the church, was manifested in his preaching of the evangel. Preaching the faith that he once destroyed, (Gal. 1-23). 'I am ready to preach the Gospel to you who are at Rome also, (Romans 1-16). The themes of Paul's preaching emphasised, time and again, the Deity of Christ, His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. Paul pointed his hearers to the One Who was exalted at God's right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour. The future Judge and Coming King, formed part of this variegated message, the Holy Spirit applies the message to suit the need of the individual, to some a message of Love, to others a warning of Judgement. Paul was ready to testify, are we? Let the redeemed of the Lord say so! (Psalm 107-2).

RECEPTION (Acts 9-26). Barnabas, (son of consolation, son of exhortation) introduces Paul to the saints at Jerusalem, displaying spiritual discernment and sympathetic understanding in this seeming confused situation. The verse

reads, 'Saul assayed to join himself to the disciples', join—to glue, (Vine) not merely a place of convenience, but a permanent bond of fellowship. There is no Scripture which suggests 'occasional' fellowship, and if there is a destructive element which would destroy the truth of the gathered out company, it is the afore-mentioned. If the truths relative to reception were applied with love and resolve, the troubles which are the consequence of the 'open' Lord's Supper, and un-baptized believers in fellowship would be non-existent. We may appear to be generous and all embracing, but the seeds of confusion are being sown with its possibility of a harvest.

FELLOWSHIP (Acts 9-28). 'And he was **WITH** them **COMING IN** and **GOING OUT** at Jerusalem.' '**WITH THEM,**' surely this speaks of unity and fellowship, 'Peter stood up with the eleven' (Acts 2-14), the Lord Jesus chose twelve that they might be **WITH** Him, (Mark 3-14). Again Paul looked for Timothy **WITH** the brethren (I Cor. 16-11). Are we **WITH** the brethren? **COMING IN**, would this be suggestive of the privileges of the assembly, **GOING OUT**, this would speak of the responsibilities of the assembly, both are inter-related, and are equally important. How true it is that the 'alabaster box' must be broken in worship, before we blow the 'silver trumpet' in service. Should there be a desire to commence a work independent of the assembly, the brethren should be consulted, with a view to receiving the approval and fellowship of the assembly in this particular work. Fellowship carries these responsibilities and many more, and should manifest, intelligence and co-operation of the highest order. How many have sown the seeds of division by assisting brethren to commence independent activities. Service should issue from this fellowship in the assembly and be productive for the assembly.

One kernel of wheat can, in time, cover a continent and feed nations; and the results of cultivating the "imperishable seed" are as much greater and more desirable than the harvests of material seed as the heavens are higher than the earth. Only the "imperishable seed" can bring about imperishable results. The Bible says: "Every seed bringeth forth after its kind." Each promise, by the blessings promised, reveals the nature of the harvest the seed will produce. True Christianity is a system of promises fulfilled.—ANON.

THE OBITUARY OF MOSES

by J. E. TODD

There is spiritual encouragement to be found in the obituary columns of Christian magazines. We read of long years of faithfulness to the Lord, of works carried out and accomplished in His name. The question arises, what will my life be worth when it is reviewed at its close?

The obituary of Moses (Deut. 34 : 1-12) provides a model of how a Christian's obituary should read. But the words cannot be written, if the deeds are not done!

Moses enjoyed the supreme blessing that is open to a human being in this life. He not only saw the purposes of God unfolding, but he also played a practical role in those purposes. As Moses looked over the land of Canaan from the top of Mount Nebo (v. 1-4), he realised that God was about to fulfil His promise to Abraham, by giving this land to his descendants, the nation of Israel. Moses also had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that he had been a divine instrument in bringing the nation to the borders of that land. This blessing is open to every Christian. We are in the happy position of seeing God's purposes being fulfilled. Is ours the present joy of knowing that we are being actively used by God in this work by helping to spread the good news of eternal salvation?

But Moses was not perfect, 'Thou shalt not go over thither' (v. 4). Because of his sin in the wilderness of Zin, Moses was disqualified from entering the promised land (Num. 20 : 1-13). Moses could have been used by God to lead Israel into the land. But Moses' usefulness to God, great as it was, was curtailed by sin. We must ever watch that sin does not limit our usefulness in God's hands. Remember, it was not at the weakest point of his character that Moses failed, but at the strongest point. It was the Moses who 'was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth' (Num. 12 : 3), who lost his temper in the wilderness of Zin. Extreme provocation was no excuse!

'Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated' (v. 7).

Moses visibly enjoyed the blessings of God which he dispensed to others, for he had blessed the tribe of Asher thus, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be' (Deut. 33 : 25). In the New Testament the Christian is not promised good physical health into old age, but the scriptures do promise another kind of good health all the days of our lives. John wrote to Gaius, 'That thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth' (3 John 2). It is the gospel which brings the glow of spiritual good health to the soul, including the joy of salvation (1 Pet. 1 : 8-9), the peace of God (Phil. 4 : 7) and the hope of eternal life (1 John 5 : 11-12). As we Christians proclaim the gospel to a joyless, troubled and hopeless world, do we exhibit the blessings of which we speak? As the Asherites looked at Moses, so vigorous in his old age, the blessing he announced was credible. Does the world see in us, as Christians, the joy and the peace and the hope which are contained in the good news we proclaim? Or is there a credibility gap?

'The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days' (v. 8). Moses' loss was keenly felt. It was obvious to all that here was a man whose words and deeds had had a great practical effect for good on the lives of his fellow Israelites. They had not just lost Moses, they had also lost his indispensable good works. Do we with helpful words and acts of service, have an impact for good upon the lives of our fellow Christians? Would our loss to our assembly be keenly felt? Would they weep?

The quality of Moses' leadership is shown in his provision of the next leader for Israel after his own decease, in the person of Joshua (v. 9). This reveals Moses' deep concern for the welfare of Israel, even when he was no longer with them. It is also the measure of his true greatness. For Moses did not want to be the 'great' leader of Israel out of lust for power, but because of his zeal for the honour of God and the welfare of his people. Why do we undertake Christian service, whether in a leadership capacity or not, is it to pander to our ego (the lust for power is the most subtle lust of the flesh) or is it out of genuine love for the Lord and his people?

Moses also rendered to God the service of a prophet (v. 10). His duty as a prophet was to pass on to the people of Israel the truth about God, for Moses knew God 'face to

face'. But every believer has known God 'face to face' with a much clearer vision than Moses ever knew! 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 4 : 6). In Christ we have come 'face to face' with the glory of God's grace. Are we serving God as His prophets, by proclaiming the gospel of God's grace to a lost world?

Moses had the finest education from the universities of Egypt (Acts 7 : 22), he also commanded great authority granted to him by God, but wonderful as these things were, Moses knew they were no substitute for hard work. 'All the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do . . . all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought' (v. 11-12, R.S.V.). Moses used the power God gave him to the utmost limit, he used it in the performance of DEEDS. What do we DO? We can engage our minds with noble thoughts and schemes. But what do we DO? God has given powers to us, intelligence, time, health, energy, wealth and education. Are we using these powers to the full in pursuing the purposes of God? Moses was above all a man of ACTION, his most lasting memory was what he DID.

Perhaps our own obituary will never be published in a Christian magazine. But an account of our lives will be rendered in much greater detail at the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5 : 10, 1 Cor. 3 : 11-15, Rom. 14 : 10-12).

How will the account read?

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

(4) THE POWER OF GOD

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

The power of God is a truth that ought to give peace and joy to the heart of the believer and strike terror to the heart of the unbeliever. God's power is like Himself; infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be restrained, nor frustrated by the creature. His power is self-existent and self-sustained.

"Power belongeth unto God" Psa. 62. 11. "The thunder of His power who can understand" Job 26. 14. God's power is the life and activity of all His other attributes.

THE MAJESTY OF HIS POWER

IT IS ABSOLUTE. Power belongs to God inherently. It is God's nature to be almighty. His power is not derivative, but creative and original. He gives power to His creatures, but derives none from them.

His limitless power is expressed in the title "Lord of Hosts." 1 Sam. 1. 3; Rom. 9. 29. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven,—and none can stay His hand." Dan. 4. 35.

IT IS GREAT AND GLORIOUS. Exod. 15. 6; Psa. 79 11. He is Himself the great central source and Originator of all power. His power in nature is extensive. Psa. 135 v. 5-7. There is no power higher than God's. Psa. 62. 11.

IT IS EVERLASTING AND IRRESTIBLE. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. 26. 4. His irresistible power is seen in creation. Gen. 1. 1; Rom. 1. 20; and in providence, none can stay His hand. Deut. 32. 39.

IT IS INCOMPARABLE AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE. "Thy right hand O Lord, is become glorious in power" Exod. 15. 6, 11, 12. "What God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy might?" Deut. 3. 24; Job 40. 9; ch. 26. His omnipotent power humbles man in the dust. Psa. 18 v. 13-15; 89. 5-10.

There is infinitely more power lodged in the nature of God than is expressed in all His works. Job. 26. 14. "Hast thou an arm like God?" Job 40. 9. All other attributes would be worthless without His power.

THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER

HIS POWER IN CREATION. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." Psa. 33. 6. At God's word nothing began to be something. "He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Psa. 33. 9.

'All things are possible to God.' Matt. 19. 26; Gen. 18. v. 14. "For Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4. 11. In establishing the mountains, girding them with power. Psa. 65. 6 His power has been marvellously exemplified in creation. Jer. 32. 17. In His uncontrollable power He walketh upon the wings of the wind. Psa. 104. 3; Job 9. 8; 22. 14.

IN SUSTENTATION AND PRESERVATION "He upholds all things by the word of His power." Heb. 1. 3;

Col. 1. 17. It is the fiat of the Creator to bridle the raging waves. Job 38. 11. "Thou preserveth them all." Neh. 9. 6. God gives breath and spirit to them that walk on the earth. Isa. 42. 5.

God is the Preserver of "man and beast" Psa. 36. 6. "In him we live—and have our being" Acts 17. 28. Everywhere in Creation we see marks of order and beneficent design. It all reveals something of the glory and majesty of Jehovah. Psa. 19. 1.

IN THE MINISTRATION OF CHRIST. The signs of John's Gospel clearly demonstrate the power of God resident in His Son and meeting every need of mankind. ch. 2. 11; 4. 53; 5. 9; 6. 12-13; 11. 43-45. Seen in His teaching, Matt. 7. 28,29; 9. 31-35; Luke 5. 17, 26.

THE MERCY OF HIS POWER

Illustrated in the redemption of Israel Psa. 106. 7-10. Saved from the slavery of sin and Egypt. They were brought out of Babylon Neh. 1. 10. Deliverance from the Philistines 1 Sam. 7. 10-13.

Power in the resurrection of Christ. He could not be holden of death. John 2. 22; Acts 2. 30-36. His ascension into heaven Acts 1. 10,11. By Divine power Christ was raised, exalted and glorified Eph. 1. 19-22.

The regeneration of the sinner Eph. 2. 1, 5, 6. In the proclamation of the Gospel. Matt. 28; Rom. 1. 16; 1 Cor. 1. 24; 2 Cor. 4. 6,7.

Think of our eternal salvation Heb. 7.25; the preservation of His saints 1 Pet. 1. 5; 2 Tim. 1. 12; 4. 18. Strength for living and service, Eph. 3. 20; 6. 10; Col. 1. 11; Phil. 4. 13; support in affliction 2 Cor. 6. 7; 2 Tim. 1. 8.

May the Spirit of God enable us to appreciate daily that the power of God, is saving in its operation 1 Thess. 1. 5; spiritual in its nature Rom. 15. 13, 19; enabling in its strength, 2 Cor. 12. 9; exceeding in its greatness Eph. 1.19; effectual in its working Eph. 1. 20; moving in its service Col. 1. 29; glorious in its achievement Col. 1. 11; and witnessing in its testimony Acts 4. 33.

Meditate on the future display of Divine power in the resurrection and rapture of the saints, and the judgement of men and nations Isa. 2. 12, 17, 19; Rev. 6. 17.

(Young believers would profit from this article by looking up each reference and meditating thereon.—Ed.).

SALVATION

by W. W. FEREDAY

Salvation is only needed by those who are in distress or danger. It is not too much to say that the whole human family is in deadly peril through sin. Every member of our race enters the world morally poisoned; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not only this, but at the earliest possible stage each one enters upon a career of active transgression against God. Yet, though sin is exceedingly hateful in the eyes of God, the condition of the sinner does not excite His aversion, but rather His deep compassion and love. Hence Paul speaks repeatedly of Him as "God our Saviour." In His great mind a plan of salvation was formed even before sin made its appearance in this world.

As in creation, so in the matter of salvation, the Son is the person Who works out the Divine purpose to its appointed end. He came into the world to save sinners; yet men are not saved by His incarnation, but by His atoning death. The death of Christ has furnished God with an imperishable ground of righteousness on which to act in His grace towards perishing men. Nothing is demanded from men but faith—simple confidence in God and His beloved Son. He who in his deep need turns his eye in faith to God and Christ becomes at once entitled to all the advantages of Christ's most costly sacrifice.

Salvation is presented in the New Testament in a three-fold way. (1) It is a **PRESENT** thing, in the sense of acceptance with God. The Christian is now "in Christ," and is consequently beyond condemnation, justified and reconciled. He stands in the Divine favour now and for ever, and is loved as Christ is loved. So we read in Eph. ii. 8: "By grace ye are saved through faith." In II Tim. i. 9 also: "God Who hath saved us." The Spirit's use of the present tense in these passages should dissipate every unbelieving doubt and fear. Doubts and fears are an insult to the love of God and a dishonour to the work of the Lord Jesus.

(2) Salvation is also a **PROGRESSIVE** thing, but in this aspect it is not acceptance with God that is in view, but the difficulties of the daily path. These are very many, and often very serious. The power of Satan, the allurements

of the world, and the treachery of the heart within are a trinity of opponents not to be treated lightly by the devout. But Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, "seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). This is an effectual guarantee that every saint, however harassed, will reach the destined goal. Christ's present ministry of intercession is the assurance that not one of His own will be suffered to perish on the road.

(3) Salvation is, moreover, a FUTURE thing; in this sense it includes the body as well as the soul. Though free and happy in spirit in the consciousness of the love of God, the believer is frequently constrained to groan by reason of his unchanged body. His body is a link with the yet undelivered creation, and in sympathy with it his groan ascends to God. This will cease at Christ's return. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, apart from sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). The first coming of Christ met the need of the soul; His second coming in glory will meet the need of the body.

What anguish men will experience who place themselves entirely outside of this great salvation by their rejection of the Saviour-Son of God!

We have some Good Food in store for 1980 —
Do your best to introduce the magazine to
others. The circulation continues to increase
—and PRAY ON.

"Recompense to no man evil for evil, provide things honest in the sight of God." Rom. 12 : 17.

Our bitter feeling toward any human being means defeat in every part of our life. We cannot be right with God while we are wrong with a fellow man; only the lives that are right with God are winning lives. That is a striking word in a letter from Dan Crawford, the African missionary, "What a settling of old scores there is when the blood of the cross cleanseth away all crookedness between men, as well as a man and his God. Your straight, strapping African can often be crooked enough; but here we have the change; and now you have the man who is straight of back as well as straight of life, who believes the new doctrine, that no man treats Christ well who treats his brother wrongly."

—SUNDAY SCHOOL TIMES.

“SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD”

(Mark 14. 8)

by S. R. STOKES

“She hath done what she could”. Which would seem to imply that there was much that she could not do, and was not expected to do. She did what she was able to do ; a service which was her privilege to perform, and in the fulfilling of which she received the highest commendation.

A critical reading of the accounts in the four Gospels suggests that three women felt compelled to anoint the Lord Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) with precious ointment. There is the incident recorded in Luke 7. Here was one who was forgiven much, and nothing, no one, was allowed to stand in her way in showing her gratitude to the One who came to call sinners to repentance. Unlike the betrayer who so deceitfully kissed his Master on the cheek, she kissed His feet, anointing them, having washed them with her tears. She may have been unaware of Isaiah’s prophecy, but she knew something of the truth of the words Isaiah wrote. To her, how beautiful were the feet of Him who had brought her the good tidings of Salvation—God’s regard, and God’s provision for those burdened with sin!

Then there are the three references in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12. Some say that, conforming to the characteristics of each Gospel, each of the writers record a different aspect of the same occasion. In this then there are difficulties. For example :

(1) The timing. Mark records that the incident took place within two days of the celebration of the Passover. John says, “six days before the Passover.”

(2) The location. Matthew and Mark state specifically that it was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper. John seems to imply that, certainly in Bethany, but perhaps in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, for Martha was busily serving.

(3) Matthew and Mark do not name the woman, but they agree that the very precious ointment was poured on the Lord’s head. John says that it was Mary who anointed His feet, and wiped them with her hair.

(4) Matthew registers protest from the disciples; Mark,

from "some" who were there. John names Judas Iscariot as the one who protested, and adds the reason why Judas should do so.

All three Gospels record the intervention of the Lord, but with some enlargement in Matthew and Mark. In His estimation the woman had wrought a good work, beautiful in His eyes, and a work which would be spoken of for a memorial of her, wheresoever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world. Could any commendation be of a higher order than that? And, apparently, a ministry suitable, and appropriate for a woman.

But further. John quotes the Lord as saying, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Mark records the statement, "she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." And we know that, in Old Testament times, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, and indeed the Tabernacle, and all in it. The holy anointing oil (Exodus 30) was to be used, as indicated by the Lord God, in the appointment to a specified ministry. In that connection, Exodus 40, and 1 Kings 19 : 15, 16 come readily to mind. Was there something of this in the woman's mind when she anointed the Lord's body to the burying, remembering that burial is the true certifying of death? Was she Divinely taught? Had she a degree of understanding, that the Father had appointed His Son to this sacrificial death? If this is a true assumption, then she was in advance of those who later declared that He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." That all was done in accordance with "whatsoever (God's) hand and (God's) counsel determined before to be done."

A silent, devoted sister, who needed not to covet ministry reserved for the brethren, but who had an understanding of the Divine will and purpose ; doing what she could, and which was entirely appropriate for her to do ; and delighting the heart of the One who was to her pre-eminent above all others.

* * * *

Others also

DID WHAT THEY COULD

and will receive an abundant reward—

PHEBE—Our sister, servant of the church, succourer of many, including Paul.

PRISCILLA—a fellow helper, laid down her neck for Paul, the local church met in her house.

MARY bestowed much labour on the saints.

TRYPHENA and TRYPHOSA were labouring in the Lord.

THE BELOVED PERSIS had laboured much in the Lord.

THE MOTHER OF RUFUS had at some time “mothered” Paul. (see Romans 16).

NOTES BY THE COMMITTEE

God is able to make all grace abound toward you. II Cor. 9:8.

Thy promises, O God, are Yea,
And precious too, exceeding great;
They ne'er can fail—they stand for aye,
The stay of all who on Thee wait.

Another year has been entered by the grace of God and there is much to indicate that it may be the year in which we shall hear that SHOUT for which we wait, and the promise of our Lord be fulfilled. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

The past year has borne its testimony to the goodness of our God Who faithfully made “all grace abound toward us.” We praise Him for His guidance and favour, and for His fulfilment of many promises in our recurring needs.

It has been observed that the spirit that is in the world can often invade the assemblies of God. We are not ignorant of the devices of Satan, and we know that our God is not the Author of confusion. The increasing confusion in the political world need not surprise us, nor should we fear the perverseness of Christendom and its amalgamations, for Scripture forewarns us. But the concern of the Apostle may well be ours to-day, as it was in his day, concerning some INSIDE the assembly. “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). Preservation is still for us, “God, and the Word of His grace” (v. 32). Thank God His promises “ne'er can fail—they stand for aye, the stay of all who on Him wait.”

We thank all those who contributed helpful articles. Their free labour of love will surely have its reward. Thanks are also due to all those who helped us in distribution of the magazine, and to our brother Glenville whose help is greatly appreciated. We also sincerely thank God for the help given to our Honorary Editor in the courage and wisdom shown in the production of the

magazine, in addition to his service for the Lord in ministry of the Word in the homeland and overseas. Again we thank all those individuals and assemblies who were willing and able to extend to us their practical fellowship in the production of the magazine.

Our Committee has welcomed Mr. William Neill, who has offered to assist in the clerical work of the magazine. He is a Civil Servant, and, with his wife, enjoys fellowship with the saints in the Dunmurry assembly, Belfast. This is a great relief to our brother Hogg, who, with advancing years, required clinical treatment for eyesight trouble during the past year.

And now a few **NOTES FOR NEW READERS**. We send the magazine post-free. If possible, endeavour to obtain your copies through assembly parcel. This reduces work and expense. Where this is not practical we gladly send direct. In applying for copies kindly state the **NUMBER** of copies required and oblige by giving name and address, with Postal Code, **ALWAYS IN BLOCK LETTERS**. This saves our time and reduces our mistakes. Since the magazine is supported by the free-will offerings of the Lord's people, please **AVOID WASTE AT ALL TIMES**, by promptly advising us of reduction in numbers or cancellations.

To all those who have remembered us in their prayers we offer our grateful thanks. Please continue this valuable grace.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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THE LORD'S SUPPER

Blest ORDINANCE Divine,
The Supper of the Lord
Received from Christ—direct command
In upper room prepared.

SYMBOLIC is this feast,
His body in the bread,
The sacred cup displaying clear
The precious blood He shed.

THANKSGIVING to our God,
Assembled Church proclaim
As hearts respond in answering love
And bless His precious Name.

A sweet MEMORIAL time
As saints surround anew
The Risen Lord, who bled and died
To hide their sins from view.

A TESTAMENT of Grace,
The covenant is sure,
The outpoured blood atones for sin,
Remembered never more.

A MESSAGE loud and clear
To all the world proclaim,
We show the death of our dear Lord
While meeting in His Name.

A PLEDGE—it will not fail,
The Promise—"Till He Come",
The "Blessed Hope"—this feast affirms
The soon returning One.

So let us bow our hearts
Again with one accord,
Thank God anew that we surround
THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

T. G. HUTCHINSON,
7551 Costain Court, Richmond, B.C.
Canada. 14th January, 1978.

THE PREACHER AND HIS PUPILS

by H. RHODES

I Thessalonians, Chapter 2

The seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the apostles supplies us with the historical background to this letter of Pauls to the church at Thessalonica, and should be read carefully prior to the closer study of the letter itself. Paul adhered to the practice of going to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles, so that after three weeks, witnessing in the synagogues, and being harassed and driven out by the Jews, ch. 2, verses 15 to 17, he turned to the Gentiles and found a more ready response, for many believed. Because of the jeopardy which he had placed himself and others in, he left Thessalonica hurriedly, though reluctantly, and went on to Berea. From there he went on to Athens, but in heart he was still in Thessalonica. How were they faring? Would they endure the persecution he knew them to be suffering? Had his hurried departure been misunderstood? Would he be misjudged as to his motives? It was for this cause he sent Timothy back while he himself went on to Corinth. There he waited patiently for his return, which when he came brought news that was both comforting and encouraging and he writes to tell them so, and to instruct them in things he had obviously been unable to do because of his hurried departure. ch. 3,1-8.

Of the 89 verses that comprise this letter, some 26 refer to Paul and his associates, 45 to the Thessalonians, and the remainder to christian doctrine, chiefly in relation to the Lord's second coming, from which we gather that Paul's desire is to see the features of Christ reproduced in them. (See chapter 4, verses 1-12). In persuance of this one aim, he unfolds to them some of the deep underlying motives for his behaviour, for example is better than precept.

Here are six things that characterised this prince of preachers, which, if observed by all would-be preachers today would greatly enhance their effectiveness in the Lord's work.

1. HIS CONFLICT. See ch. 2. verses 1 and 2.
2. HIS CONVICTION. See ch. 2. verses 2 and 3.
3. HIS CLARITY. See ch. 2. verse 5.

4. HIS CONSCIENCE. See ch. 2. verses 5 and 10.
5. HIS COMPASSION. See ch. 2. verses 8 and 9.
6. HIS CONDUCT. See ch. 2. verses 9 and 10.

1. HIS CONFLICT.

The memory of the shameful treatment and outrage suffered at Philippi as well as the experiences at Thessalonica must have been fresh in his mind but were never strong enough to deter or discourage him from his task of preaching the gospel. Paul had been fortified against this from the very first. The words of the Lord Jesus through Ananias at his conversion was "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my sake." After a very brief period of witnessing in the synagogues at Damascus, the Jews there were so infuriated at his preaching that they watched the city's gates day and night to kill him. Acts ch. 9, 1-25. Wherever he goes it is the same. Antioch in ch. 13. Iconium, Lystra, Derbe in ch. 14. Philippi in ch. 16. Corinth in ch. 18. Ephesus in ch. 19, etc, in every city, bonds and afflictions abide me, he says. Yet none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself. Acts 20, vs. 22-24.

To take sides openly on the side of Christ in an hostile world will involve persecution in some measure, but ought we not to expect it? should we run away from it? If any man suffer as a christian the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon him. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. II Tim. ch. 3 v. 12.

There is also another aspect of conflict, i.e. the spiritual, see such scriptures as Ephesians ch. 6. verses 10-18 : II Cor. ch. 10, verses 3 and 4. From this there is no discharge.

2. CONVICTION. v. 4.

The dictionary definition is 'a settled belief.' Paul was never in doubt as to the dignity conferred upon him in being entrusted with the gospel, of which he was not ashamed. v. 4. But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; In II Tim. 1 v. 11 he speaks of being appointed a preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles. Again, in I Cor. ch. 4 v. 1. Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. As such, he is aware

that he will one day give an account of his stewardship. In writing to Timothy he enjoins him to keep that which is committed to his trust. I Tim. ch. 6 v. 20, and again, The things which thou hast heard of me the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Is this the reason why he uses the phrase 'This is a faithful saying' so much in the pastoral letters? To Paul there could be no substitute for the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Nothing could be added to make it more attractive.

Are we today losing confidence in the message we preach? or determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I Cor. ch. 2, v. 4.

3. CLARITY. v. 5.

In this he employed no flattery, no cover up methods, no deceit, no persuasive words of man's wisdom, no endeavour to please his hearers, no guile, (if II Cor. ch. 12 v. 16 seems to be a contradiction, see Weymouth's translation.) his endeavour at all times was to speak words easy to understand, that by them he might teach others also I Cor. 14 v. 19. In the world of music, no instrument makes sense unless there is a meaningful variation in the sounds produced. So also in the military field. If the trumpet give an uncertain sound it fails in its purpose. It is useless. See Num. ch 10 verses 1-13. The example of Ezra might be emulated here when reading the scriptures or preaching. 'They read in the book of the law of the Lord, and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading, and they made great mirth because they had understood the words that had been declared unto them.' Neh. ch. 8. verses 5-12. Surely, all who preach and pray publicly should endeavour to make their voice heard, or how can those who listen say 'amen'?

(To be continued)

ETERNAL LIFE

(contributed)

Eternal life has been erroneously regarded by some as synonymous with immortality. The mistake is a serious one, because it confounds what God has given to all men in the way of nature with what His grace bestows on those who believe in His Son. By the divine in-breathing

at the beginning God was pleased to confer upon our race a character of being which is inextinguishable. This we call immortality ; and it is possessed by all men alike, whether their eternal destiny be one of bliss or woe.

Eternal life is a totally distinct thing. It is most certain that the contemporaries of our Lord regarded it as an immense boon to be earnestly desired; the various questions that were addressed to Him concerning it leading us to this conclusion. All his enquiries seemed to be of one mind in supposing it to be the reward of human effort; the earnest young ruler of Mark x. and the cautious lawyer of Luke x. both putting their question in the same form : "Master, what must I DO to inherit eternal life?" It was natural that they should speak thus; for among men every desirable thing is only obtained by money or toil. Yet if they had realised man's true condition in God's sight, and their own condition in particular they would have expressed themselves differently. Has not the Spirit of God described men as "dead in trespasses and sins?" (Eph. ii. 1). What can the dead do? Did not the Saviour liken men to a debtor who "had nothing to pay?" (Luke vii. 42). What price can bankrupts render?

The truth is, eternal life is the gift of God. As Paul expresses it : "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). Here we have the principle on which God grants this inestimable boon. It is not the reward of good works, or it would be a debt (Rom. iv. 4); it is the gift of sovereign love to those who could neither do nor pay anything in order to secure it. The ground on which eternal life is given is fully expressed in our Lord's familiar words to Nicodemus, recorded in John iii. 14-16. His cross the satisfaction of God's righteousness and the mighty expression of God's love, has made it possible for Him to confer eternal life on all who obey the Gospel.

Eternal life has two aspects. Scripture speaks of it both as a present possession and as a prize to be gained at the Lord's coming. The one aspect is to be found in the writings of John; the other in the writings of Paul. John's words are most explicit : "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life" (I John v. 11-12). This is a great reality, to be enjoyed here and now

by every believer. Its grand characteristic is the knowledge of the Father and the Son. Paul's language runs differently: "The end, everlasting life" (Rom. vi. 22). Is this contradiction of the teaching of the beloved Apostle? By no means. Paul's thought includes the body as well as the soul; it looks on, therefore, to the glorious moment of the Lord's return when the bodies of all the objects of His love will be instantaneously transformed, and become instinct with eternal life even as their souls are now. As the same inspired writer strikingly puts it in II Cor. v. 4: "Mortality will be swallowed up of life."

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

(5) THE MERCY OF GOD

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

The contemplation of God's mercy fills our souls with humility and praise, two virtues acceptable in the sight of God. The word "mercy" and its synonyms occur over three hundred and forty times in the Bible.

Our God is rich in mercy; "it is everlasting," tender, plenteous, great and abundant. Read and meditate on Psalm 136; "for His mercy endureth for ever."

MERCY DEFINED

Mercy is warm affection demonstrated to the needy, helpless and distressed. It is compassionate treatment of an enemy. It is that adorable perfection in God by which He pities and relieves the miserable. Mercy reminds us of our miserable condition as children of wrath, and we cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" Luke 18. 13, 38.

MERCY DESCRIBED

Mercy is part of the character of God and is greatly to be praised. Psa. 136.1; 59.16; 62.12. His mercy is great Numb. 14.18; 1 Kings 3.6; plenteous Psa. 86.5, 86.15; 103.8; tender Psa. 25.6; 103.4; Luke 1.78; high as the heaven, Psa 36.5; 103.11; manifold Neh. 9.27; Lam. 3.32; new every morning Lam. 3.23; sure Isa. 55.3; Micah 7.20; filling the earth Psa. 119.64; abundant 1 Pet. 1.3; rich Eph. 2.4; over all His works Psa. 145.9; and are everlasting Psa. 103.17. Well may we say with the Psalmist, "I will sing aloud of Thy mercy." 59.16.

MERCY DISTINGUISHED

Wherein differs the "mercy" of God from His "grace"? Exod. 33.19. These words have much in common and yet there are shades of distinction between them. The mercy of God has its spring in the Divine goodness. Grace views man without merit; mercy views him as miserable.

This distinction is seen in the divine dealings with the unfallen angels. They are the objects of God's free and sovereign grace, but He has never exercised mercy toward them. Think of their election 1 Tim. 5.21; and of their preservation from apostacy, when Satan rebelled and dragged down many of the celestial host. Rev. 12.9. It was in grace that God made Christ their Head. Col. 2.10; 1 Pet. 3.22. Think of the exalted position which has been assigned them, Dan. 7.10; and their honourable commissions from Him. Heb. 1.14. God has dealt with the holy angels in grace, for they have not merited His favours.

Mercy and love are distinguished. Love may be for an equal; mercy can only exist for an inferior. The GENERAL mercy of God, is extended to the entire creation. Psal. 145.9; Acts 17.25.

God does show TEMPORAL mercy to the wicked but this is confined strictly to the present life, "for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good." Matt. 5.45. We rejoice in His SOVEREIGN mercy exercised through Christ and reserved for the heirs of salvation, it is regulated by His sovereign will Rom. 9.15.

MERCY DEMONSTRATED

It is manifested in God sending His Son as the dayspring from on high Luke 1.78. The Lord Jesus did not bring the mercy of God to us; it was the mercy of God that brought Christ to us. The Lord Jesus is the channel of mercy, but not the cause of mercy. The merits of Christ and His atoning work make it possible for God to righteously bestow mercy upon us, and save us Titus 3.5 Saul of Tarsus is a good example of the mercy of God in salvation 1 Tim. 1.12,13. Our regeneration is due to the mercy of God Eph. 2.1-4; 1 Pet. 1.3.

Even the punishment of the wicked is an act of mercy. It is an act of justice, vindicating the honour of God; an act of equity, they are made to suffer the due reward of their iniquities Psal. 143.12; 136.15; Rev. 19.1-3. The Lord

Jesus is the true Mercy-Seat and we have fled to Him for mercy Rom. 3.25. His vicarious death was an absolute necessity John 12.24; 8.28.

MERCY DELIGHTED IN

Let us rejoice in the spiritual mercies assured to us as the children of God. "He is plenteous in mercy and truth." Psa. 86.15. Is merciful to His people Deut. 32.43; to them that fear Him Psa. 103.17; Luke 1.50. By trusting in our God mercy shall compass him about Ps. 32.10.

Mercy is promised to the returning backslider. Jer. 3.12; Hos. 14.4; Joel 2.13; to the afflicted Isa. 49.13; 54.7. It was shown to Jonah and Nineveh Jon. 4.2. Our God is the Father of mercies 2 Cor. 1.3, and showed mercy to Epaphroditus Phil. 2.27, and to Paul, 1 Tim. 1.13.

Daily we experience the preserving, pardoning and sustaining mercy of our God. Exod. 15.13; Psa. 21.7; 59.16. His mercy is M — manifold, E — everlasting, R — rich, C — cheering, and for Y — you.

Meditate on other Divine attributes, His foreknowledge, sovereignty, patience, love, faithfulness and wrath.

THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST

1 John 5 : 7

by JOHN NELSON DARBY

Though I have ever held this verse, to say the least, to be very doubtful from the course of the meaning, it is not to discuss this at present I write, but another point of importance—the use of the term Son.

There are those who, objecting to the term Son as applied to the divinity of our Lord, stand on the verge of, if not slipping into, confusion of the Persons.

It is the name of the Person, not the nature; and the Person is personally known to us, fully in the revelation of God in Jesus.

But while no man knowing the Son but the Father, the manifestation of God in the Son—in Jesus—makes the language of man scarce preservable from error, if we wish to affirm things *separately*, of the natures when affirmed about the Son, yet is that which is revealed very distinct. But it is spoken about the Person into which the man was brought, and therefore is rightly spoken of Jesus, and the

connecting point of faith, not to know there is a Son, but that Jesus is the Son of God.

Nevertheless the works of God as such are directly attributed to the Son before the incarnation of, or rather in Jesus, and therefore we are justified (much more than justified) in speaking of the Son as we do in the Trinity.

Thus Heb. 1 has "spoken to us by the Son, . . . by Whom also He made the worlds." We are therefore justified in speaking of the Son as before the worlds.

Again in Col. 1, where His whole personal glory is brought out—"In Whom we have redemption" (His dear Son) ". . . the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created which are in heaven and upon earth . . . all things were created by Him" (i.e., the Son) "and for Him; and He is before all things," (the present state) "and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body" (His official glory), "the church, . . . the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased"—not the Father, this much misleads, but — "the Godhead that in Him" (the Son) "should all fulness dwell" (to wit, in Jesus) — for in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The Father dwelt in Him, and the Holy Ghost was upon Him in all its fulness of indwelling presence.

Could there, I need scarce say, be separation, but He was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son.

Though He did His works by the Spirit, and the Father that dwelt in Him did the works, all fulness dwelt in Him.

He *was* the Son, and by Him all things were reconciled, His actual efficient work.

In a word, God was in Christ, but there again we have the warrant for the speaking the name of His Person as revealed to us of the Son as before the worlds, "In Whom . . ."

Again, that our Lord was addressed as the Son in His Godhead is further manifest as it is said and written, ". . . unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom."

They therefore seem to err who do not give the title of Son to our Lord as connected with His Godhead, if they

say this name is known to us only through His manifestation in the flesh.

I believe so surely, both of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost alike unknown to us before we knew them by the indwelling and revelation of Jesus, God *manifest* (in the flesh), illustrating His character *and* opening out the fulness more revealingly.

I feel it would be opening a gap for evil to acquiesce any further in this, for the Scripture does not acquiesce in it, though as stated below it is not only sound but blessed and glorious truth. But it is better to acquiesce in nothing but Scripture, for one does not know where it would carry one.

The Word was personally known to us as the Son revealing the Father by the Spirit, and we beheld that the glory of the Word was the glory even in Jesus of the only begotten with a Father, His nature, inheritance and dignity the same, though while humbled He gave the glory all to Him in all that is revealed in this.

I fear using the fountain of blessing and glory in men's cavils, distortion, and pride.

But I say we are scripturally justified, and bound to silence these cavils, in speaking of the Son as acting in His creative capacity in the Godhead before the worlds, although we know that Person, or any Person, by His incarnation in which centered the unfolding of the mystery.

But we are bound to hold to this most important and essential (strictly speaking essential) truth as connected with the revelation of anything and subjection to any truth at all, for all blessing flows from believing and receiving from the Father, by the Son and through the Holy Ghost—thus the revealed, known and worshipped source of all blessing, the sum of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

Nor is it less important that we should understand Son to be the name of the Person, not of the nature, for as we see that by Him He made the worlds, God over all blessed for evermore, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever," competent to sit in the glory of His Father's throne, and sitting there in the glory which He had with Him before the world was.

So also we know that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," than which indeed as magnifying the law nothing can be more wonderful; and

“then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that did put all things under Him.”

If we ask how can this be, we have the evidence of that in the fact of His having been so before; and thus the Lord secures and settles our faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit bringing us into blessing by giving us the facts of faith realized when they might be difficult of intelligence as to their internal possibility from our narrow nature and might be said to be contrary to natural possibility.

So it is written, “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour.”

If we say He were not the Son till the incarnation, then do I utterly lose the link of connection of His being sent from above, for then were it only after He was a Man in the world that He was sent about as a Man, but no, He was sent into the world— not to multiply passages, which are innumerable, for our connection with God hangs upon it.

If therefore the name Word be applied to our Lord previously so as to deny the relationship of Son instead of, as I have said, further illustrating what He is, Whom none knoweth but the Father, then I say that is using the testimony of “the brightness of His glory” to destroy a distinct glory and the first glory and blessing of Christianity, i.e. in relation to us.

Moreover the full glory of our Lord’s headship hangs upon the recognition of this truth, for as Firstborn of every creature it is by Him all things were created. So that the headship of creation in the Son rests upon this “for by Him . . .”

Hence we strike at the sphere of our Lord’s glory if we strike at the creative Sonship.

It is most important therefore as regards our relationship to God — that first link in the chain that brings us to God, gives us fellowship with the Father, and is the spring therefore of *all* this very point.

The Father sent the Son . . . it is *what* each were, the Sender and the Sent. I know nothing previous to this.

It is the Son that is the “brightness,” only I did not *know* this nor Him till the incarnation, nor did a Gentile till the resurrection, nor indeed any till it pleased God to reveal it in Him, though there are full glimpses of it and statements in the Old Testament.

Nor did I know the Father a bit more, nor the Holy Spirit

in His indwelling, though holy men spake by Him.

No more than I know the Son till taught of Him (though He made the worlds), nor the Father till the Son reveal Him.

But the office of Christianity is to reveal the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to make known this relationship in the Godhead (in our enjoyment of the results) into which the creature is brought in blessings in the intelligent, Spirit-taught and quickened church, the personal fulness of Him Who being such filleth all in all because the fulness dwelt in Him.

This is most important as regards His glory because the creative power is thus associated with redemptive power—is associated with, as *the basis of the headship glory*.

The 30th of Proverbs vv. 1-6 is a most important passage, humbling us to profit, and yet opening to faith what man cannot enter into—a very important passage.

I have made this memorandum not to prove (it is known by communion in my own soul, i.e., to myself, communion with the Father by Him), but to show its importance because of the destructiveness of breaking the blessed link. The Word is our most important revelation of what He the Lord is—most important.

The Son is another most important revelation of what He, Jesus, is — the revelation, the name, the truth of His relationship in person in God, or in the Godhead.

If we do not see Him in this with the Father, we *lose all* the value of it in Him as incarnate.

It is another revelation about Him

No one can give me the partakings of the divine nature.

No one can call me into this relationship in integral blessing unless he be in it vitally, unless he be in it in His union with the Father

Therefore the holy thing born of the virgin is called the Son of God, and in Him the fulness is manifested ever of God, and yet we are adopted into it further.

Officially the Word, might I not say, constitutes the apostle-ship, the Son the priesthood of Christ, both exercised as a Man, but in both competent for it from their respective characters. In a word, He *is* the Son.

As to any question arising from the term “begotten,” it is only weakness itself, for if we argue from the *Word*, He was a Son before He was begotten, for the resurrection

was the day He was begotten, yet was He not a Son while walking on the earth ?

When He made the worlds He was a Son. I know Him as a Son in all that He is, and His acts, through some of them here. "Though He *were* a Son" — I see it as clearly as God's own truth, and it is in this I have to be receptive of truth by God in grace, not judging by my poor incapable intellect.

The love of the truth is a great matter in subjection of spirit, not to lay down the imaginations of man, but to be thankful for the communion of God, and not to depart, or bear departure from the Scriptures.

When we have to speak, God's Spirit will teach us what to say. As for me, I feel I may err in every word. I resist utterly when the truth of God is set aside, yea I trust ever will, by His grace.

As for me myself, I am but as the beasts that perish incapable of these things to know them. As revealed they are all my blessing, for God is revealed (reveals Himself) in them to me, so that one is taught of God's Spirit. I could not depart from them. I hold them fast with life. They are between me and my God in thought. I defend them and I do not discuss them with men as questions. I speak of matters of faith which have been made known by faith to me, as God gives me utterance, and I recur to His word to guard as it teaches them where His Spirit is. I hold it vital to hold the Sonship before the worlds. It is the truth.

(The language of J.N.D. is always difficult to follow, but we thought our readers would like to see his firm belief in the Eternal Sonship of Christ.—Ed.).

HOLINESS

by W. W. FEREDAY

The great Apostle of the Gentiles was most emphatic when he wrote "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). The nature of God being immaculate in holiness none can tread His courts who do not answer morally to that nature. It is impossible that anything defiling should enter there, or anyone who works abomination.

Holiness may be distinguished from righteousness thus : the latter is consistency in one's relationships ; the former is an inherent abhorrence of iniquity, and delight in what

is excellent and good. Measured by such a standard as this, every member of our fallen race stands disqualified by nature from the presence of God. In this "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). It would be as reasonable to expect to gather figs of thistles, or grapes of thorns, as to look for natural holiness in a single action of the first man. It is the beginning of good things with a man when this is frankly and humbly acknowledged before God.

Here Christ comes in as the sinner's only hope. Himself the Holy One of God, on whom death had no claim, and for whom judgment had no meaning, in His grace He condescended to suffer and die for the sins and unholiness of others. Risen from the dead, He is presented by God to all as the One who meets every need. To the Corinthian believers the Spirit wrote : "Of Him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification (or holiness), and redemption" (I Cor. i. 30). Every believer has in Christ a new and absolutely holy life and nature, which enables him to delight himself in God, and which fits him for the divine presence for ever.

Holiness in the daily life flows from the realisation of this. The true Christian yearns to be practically consistent with what God has made him in Christ. He does not occupy his mind with himself, but with Christ, to Whose image he earnestly longs to be fully conformed. He looks no longer for any good thing in the flesh ; instead, he treats it in faith as a crucified thing, and seeks to develop his new man by the power of the Holy Ghost. He keeps before him continually the important exhortation in I Peter i. 15-16, "as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (or behaviour); because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." In accordance with this, he yields his members "servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom. vi. 19). Affliction, when it comes, he welcomes as discipline from God, sent for his profit, that he may become a partaker practically of God's holiness (Heb. xii. 10).

What a wonder-working God is ours, who is able to take up sin-stained children of the fall, and produce in them a nature and character which answer in every respect to His own ! The beginning, or first step, in the path of true holiness is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Editor,

Would you permit a brief comment on part of the article entitled 'JUSTIFICATION,' that appeared in the Sept./Oct. 1979 issue of 'Assembly Testimony.'

The passage under question is as follows:

"The Apostle James has been thought to contradict in his epistle the Pauline doctrine of Justification by faith. Whatever difficulty the reader may find vanishes immediately the fact is grasped that Paul is occupied (in Rom. 3-5) with the justification of the ungodly, while James (in Ch. 2) speaks of the justification of the godly. The one is before God and the other is **before men**. God justifies the ungodly on the principle of faith; it is of grace alone, works being altogether excluded: the godly justify themselves (i.e. their confession) **before men** by their good works."

The point under review is the assumption that James 2 "speaks of the justification of the godly . . . **before men**."

Consider the incidents associated with the justification of Abraham and Rahab mentioned in James 2 v. 21, 25. Did any human eye witness Abraham offering up Isaac his son upon the altar? Would such an act justify Abraham before men? Would men not rather have condemned Abraham for such a barbarous murder?

Or consider the case of Rahab. Would her fellow-citizens have justified the act of receiving the messengers and sending them out another way? Would they not rather have condemned her as a traitor? And on what grounds could you classify Rahab the **harlot** as godly?

The conclusion is obvious; "IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIES" Rom. 8. 33 and NOT men.

It is true that James does not contradict Paul; faith and work cannot be divorced. Paul commends the Thessalonians for "your work of faith" Ch. 1 v. 3, and writes to the Galatians in Ch. 5 v. 6 of "faith which worketh by love." But what Paul strenuously resists is the Judaistic error of justification through "the works of the law." Paul puts it positively in Romans and negatively in Galatians.

"We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" Rom. 3. v. 28. R.V.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law" Gal. 2 v. 16.

Yet what Paul just as strongly commanded was that "they who have believed God may be careful to maintain **good works**" Titus 3 v. 8. This is a matter that he refers to again and again. e.g. Eph. 2 v.10; I Tim. 5 v.9; I Tim. 6 v.18; Titus 2 v.7; Titus 2 v.14.

Nor indeed was Paul the originator of such teaching on "good works," he was but "consenting to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" I Tim. 6 v. 3, for did not He teach

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

We conclude then that Paul makes a world of difference between “good works” and “the works of the law.”—Andrew Auld.

PRAYER AND THE PRAYER MEETING

by C. H. M.

In considering the deeply important subject of prayer, two things claim our attention: first, the moral basis of prayer; secondly, its moral conditions.

1. The basis of prayer is set forth in such words as the following: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John xv. 7). Again, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” (1 John iii. 21, 22). So also, when the blessed apostle seeks an interest in the prayers of the saints, he sets forth the moral basis of his appeal—“Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” (Heb. xiii. 18).

From these passages, and many more of like import, we learn that, in order to effectual prayer, there must be an obedient heart, an upright mind, a good conscience. If the soul be not in communion with God—if it be not abiding in Christ—if it be not ruled by his holy commandments—if the eye be not single, how could we possibly look for answer to our prayer? We should, as the apostle James says, be “asking amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts.” How could God, as a holy Father, grant such petitions? Impossible.

How very needful, therefore it is to give earnest heed to the moral basis on which our prayers are presented. How could the apostle have asked the brethren to pray for him, if he had not a good conscience, a single eye, an upright mind—the moral persuasion that in all things be really wished to live honestly? We may safely assert, he could do no such thing.

But may we not often detect ourselves in the habit of lightly and formally asking others to pray for us? It is a

very common formula amongst us—"Remember me in your prayers," and most surely nothing can be more blessed or precious than to be borne upon the hearts of God's dear people in their approaches to the mercy-seat; but do we sufficiently attend to the moral basis? When we say, "Brethren, pray for us," can we add, as in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, "For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly?" And when we ourselves bow before the throne of grace, is it with an uncondemning heart—and upright mind—a single eye—a soul really abiding in Christ, and keeping His commandments?

These, beloved reader are searching questions. They go right to the very centre of the heart—down to the very roots and moral springs of our being. But it is well to be thoroughly searched in reference to everything, but especially in reference to prayer. There is a terrible amount of unreality in our prayers—a sad lack of the moral basis—a vast amount of "asking amiss."

Hence, the want of power and efficacy in our prayers—hence, the formality—the routine—yea, the positive hypocrisy. The Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." How solemn this is! Our God will have reality; He desireth truth in the inward parts. He, blessed be His name, is real with us, and He will have us real with Him. He will have us coming before Him as we really are, and with what we really want.

How often, alas! it is otherwise, both in private and in public! How often are our prayers more like orations than petitions—more like statements of doctrine than utterances of need! It seems, at times, as though we meant to explain principles to God, and give Him a large amount of information.

These are the things which cast a withering influence over our prayer-meetings, robbing them of their freshness, their interest, and their value. Those who really know what prayer is—who feel its value, and are conscious of their need of it, attend the prayer-meeting in order to pray, not to hear orations, lectures, and expositions from men on their knees. If they want lectures, they can attend at the lecture-hall or the preaching-room; but when they go to the prayer-meeting, it is to pray. To them, the prayer-meeting is the place of expressed need and expected blessing—the place of

expressed weakness and expected power. Such is their idea of "the place where prayer is wont to be made;" and therefore when they flock thither, they are not disposed or prepared to listen to long preaching prayers, which would be deemed barely tolerable if delivered from the desk, but which are absolutely insufferable in the shape of prayer.

We write plainly, because we feel the need of great plainness of speech. We deeply feel our want of reality, sincerity, and truth in our prayers and prayer-meetings. Not infrequently it happens that what we call prayer is not prayer at all, but the fluent utterance of certain known and acknowledged truths and principles, to which one has listened so often that the reiteration becomes tiresome in the extreme. What can be more painful than to hear a man on his knees explaining principles and unfolding doctrines? The question forces itself upon us, "Is the man speaking to God, or to us?"

All these things must be taken into account; but, allowing as broad a margin as possible in which to insert these modifying clauses, we must still hold to it that there is a very deplorable lack of reverence in many of our public gatherings for prayer.

Can aught be more unseemly than to see a number of people, sitting, lolling, lounging, and gaping about while prayer is being offered? We consider it perfectly shocking, and we do here most earnestly beseech all the Lord's people to give this matter their solemn consideration, and to endeavour, in every possible way, both by precept and example, to promote the godly habit of reverence at our prayer-meetings. No doubt those who take part in the meeting would greatly aid in this matter by short and fervent prayers; but of this, more hereafter.

WE shall now proceed to consider, in the light of holy Scripture, the moral conditions or attributes of prayer. There is nothing like having the authority of the divine Word for every thing in the entire range of our practical christian life. Scripture must be our one grand and conclusive referee in all questions. Let us never forget this.

What, then, saith the Scripture as to the necessary moral conditions of prayer? Turn to Matthew 18. 19. "Again I say unto you, that *if two of you shall agree* on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

Here we learn that one necessary condition of our prayers is, *unanimity*—cordial agreement—thorough oneness of mind. The true force of the words is, “If two of you shall symphonise”—shall make one common sound. There must be no jarring note, no discordant element.

If, for example, we come together to pray about the progress of the Gospel, the conversion of souls, we must be of one mind in the matter—we must make one common sound before our God. It will not do for each to have some special thought of his own to carry out. We must come before the throne of grace in holy harmony of mind and spirit, else we cannot claim an answer, on the ground of Matthew 18. 19.

Now this is a point of immense moral weight. Its importance, as bearing upon the tone and character of our prayer-meetings, cannot possibly be over-estimated. It is very questionable indeed whether any of us have given sufficient attention to it. Have we not to deplore the objectless character of our prayer-meetings? Ought we not to come together more with some definite object on our hearts, as to which we are going to wait together upon God? We read in the first chapter of Acts, in reference to the early disciples, “These all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.” And again, in the second chapter, we read, “When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were *all with one accord in one place.*”

They were waiting, according to the Lord’s instructions, for the promise of the Father—the gift of the Holy Ghost. They had the sure word of promise. The Comforter was, without fail, to come; but this, so far from dispensing with prayer, was the very ground of its blessed exercise. They prayed; in one place; they prayed with one accord. They were thoroughly agreed. They all, without exception, had one definite object before their hearts. They were waiting for the promised Spirit; they continued to wait; and they waited with one accord, until He came. Men and women, absorbed with one object, waited in holy concord, in happy symphony—waited on, day after day, earnestly, fervently, harmoniously waited until they were endued with the promised power from on high.

Should not we go and do likewise? Is there not a sad

lack of this “one accord”—“one place”—principle in our midst? True it is, blessed be God, we have not to ask for the Holy Ghost to come. He has come; we have not to ask for the outpouring of the Spirit. He has been poured out. But we have to ask for the display of His blessed power in our midst. Supposing our lot is cast in a place where spiritual death and darkness reign. There is not so much as a single breath of life—not a leaf stirring. The heaven above seems like brass; the earth beneath, iron. Such a thing as a conversion is never heard of. A withering formalism seems to have settled down upon the entire place. Powerless profession, dead routine, stupefying mechanical religiousness, are the order of the day. What is to be done? Are we to allow ourselves to fall under the fatal influence of the surrounding malaria? Are we to yield to the paralyzing power of the atmosphere that enwraps the place? Assuredly not.

If not, what then? Let us, even if there be but two who really feel the condition of things, get together, with one accord, and pour out our hearts to God. Let us wait on Him in holy concord, with united, firm purpose, until He send a copious shower of blessing upon the barren spot. Let us not fold our arms and vainly say, “The time is not come.” Let us not yield to that pernicious offshoot of a one-sided theology, which is rightly called fatalism, and say, “God is sovereign, and He works according to His own will. We must wait His time. Human effort is in vain. We cannot get up a revival. We must beware of mere excitement.”

All this seems very plausible; and the more so because there is a measure of truth in it; indeed it is all true, so far as it goes: but it is only one side of the truth. It is truth, and nothing but the truth; but it is not *the whole truth*. Hence its mischievous tendency. There is nothing more to be dreaded than one-sided truth; it is far more dangerous than positive, palpable error. Many an earnest soul has been stumbled and turned completely out of the way by one-sided or misapplied truth. Many a true-hearted and useful workman has been chilled, repulsed, and driven out of the harvest-field by the injudicious enforcement of certain doctrines having a measure of truth, but not the full truth of God.

Nothing, however, can touch the truth, or weaken the force of Matthew 18. 19. It stands in all its blessed fulness, freeness and preciousness before the eye of faith; its terms are clear and unmistakable. "If two of you shall agree upon earth, as touching *anything* that they shall ask, it shall be done of my Father which is in heaven." Here is our warrant for coming together to pray for anything that may be laid on our hearts. Do we mourn over the coldness barrenness, and death around us? Are we discouraged by the little apparent fruit from the preaching of the gospel—the lack of power in the preaching itself, and the total absence of practical result? Are our souls cast down by the barrenness, dullness, heaviness, and low tone of all our reunions, whether at the table of our Lord, before the mercy-seat, or around the fountain of holy Scripture?

What are we to do? Fold our arms in cold indifference? Give up in despair? Or give vent to complaining, murmuring fretfulness, or irritation? God forbid! What then? Come together, "with one accord in one place," get down on our faces before our God, and pour out our hearts, as the heart of one man, pleading Matthew 18. 19.

This, we may rest assured, is the grand remedy—the un-failing resource. It is perfectly true that "God is sovereign," and this is the very reason for seeking divine power; perfectly true that "we cannot get up a revival," and that is the very reason for seeking to get it *down*; perfectly true that "We must beware of mere excitement;" equally true that we must beware of coldness, deadness, and selfish indifference.

The simple fact is, there is no excuse whatever—so long as Christ is at the right hand of God—so long as God the Holy Ghost is in our midst and in our hearts—so long as we have the Word of God in our hands—so long as Matthew 18. 19 shines before our eyes—there is, we repeat, no excuse whatever for barrenness, deadness, coldness, and indifference—no excuse for heavy and unprofitable meetings—no excuse whatever for lack of freshness in our gatherings or of fruitfulness in our service. Let us wait on God, in holy concord, and the blessing is sure to come.

If we turn to Matthew 21. 22, we shall find another of the essential conditions of effectual prayer. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive."

This is a truly marvellous statement. It opens the very treasury of heaven to faith. There is absolutely no limit. Our blessed Lord assures us that we shall receive whatsoever we ask in simple faith.

The apostle James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives us a similar assurance, in reference to the matter of asking for wisdom. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that *giveth to all liberally*, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But"—here is the moral condition—"let him ask *in faith, nothing wavering*. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall obtain anything of the Lord."

From both these passages we learn that if our prayers are to have an answer, they must be prayers of faith. It is one thing to utter words in the form of prayer, and another thing altogether to pray in simple faith, in the full, clear, and settled assurance that we shall have what we are asking for. It is greatly to be feared that some of our so-called prayers never go beyond the ceiling of the room. In order to reach the throne of God, they must be borne on the wings of faith, and proceed from hearts united and minds agreed, in one holy purpose, to wait on our God for the things which we really require.

Now, the question is, are not our prayers and prayer-meetings sadly deficient on this point? Is not the deficiency manifest from the fact that we see so little result from our prayers. Ought we not to examine ourselves as to how far we really understand these two conditions of prayer, namely, unanimity and confidence? If it be true—and it is true, for Christ has said it—that two persons, agreed to ask in faith, can have whatsoever they ask, why do we not see more abundant answers to our prayers? Must not the fault be in us? Are we not deficient in concord and in confidence?

Our Lord, in Matthew 18. 19, comes down, as we say, to the very smallest plurality—the smallest congregation—even to "two;" but of course the promise applies to dozens, scores, or hundreds. The grand point is to be thoroughly agreed, and fully persuaded, that we shall get what we are asking for. This would give a different tone and character altogether to our unions for prayer. It would make them

very much more real than our ordinary prayer-meeting, which, alas, alas! is often poor, cold, dead, objectless, and desultory, exhibiting anything but cordial agreement and unwavering faith.

How vastly different it would be if our prayer-meetings were the result of a cordial agreement on the part of two or more believing souls, to come together, and wait upon God for a certain thing, and to persevere in prayer until they receive an answer. How little we see of this! We attend the prayer-meeting from week to week—and very right we should;—but ought we not to be exercised before God as to how far we are agreed in reference to the object or objects which are to be laid before the throne? The answer to this question links itself on to another of the moral conditions of prayer.

(To be continued)

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF SWANWICK

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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YIELDED

'It is Thy Hand My God,
My sorrow comes from Thee,
I bow beneath Thy chastening rod,
'Tis Love that bruises me.'

'I would not murmur Lord,
Before Thee I am dumb,
Lest I should breathe one murmuring word,
To Thee for help I come.'

'My God Thy name is love,
A Father's hand is Thine,
With tearful eyes I look above,
And cry, "Thy will be done".

'Jesus for me hath died,
Thy Son Thou didst not spare,
His pierced Hands, His bleeding side,
Thy love for me declare.'

'Here my poor heart can rest,
My God it cleaves to Thee,
Thy will is love, Thine end is best,
All work for good to me.'

—*Selected.*

THE PREACHER AND HIS PUPILS

by H. RHODES (continued)

4. CONSCIENCE. v.v. 5 and 10.

Several times over does Paul refer to his behaviour whilst among them, reminding them of things they knew, but when speaking of the hidden things that they couldn't know, he calls God to witness. v. 5 and v. 10. A good conscience while not infallible as a guide contributes a great deal to one's freedom and effectiveness in preaching. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity—we have had our conversation in the world. II Cor. ch. 1 v. 12. again, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Acts ch. 23 v. 1. again, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men." Acts ch. 24 v. 16. How often has some sin or misdemeanor in the life of the preacher veiled the message?

The import of a good conscience may be better judged if we consider the exhortations to Timothy ch. 1 v. 5 and verse 19 of the same chapter. It is one reason why he writes to this young man, and encourages him to always maintain it. If not, the danger is a denial of the faith leading to 'making shipwreck' as Hymenaeus and Alexander. The christian is to be a good sailor as well as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Ministers of the word are to be men of conviction, holding the mystery of the faith under the protection of a good conscience. I Tim. ch. 3 v. 9. May we ever keep the window of the soul open toward heaven.

From the inward state we turn again to the outward and note the preachers

5. COMPASSION. v. 7.

We were gentle among you as a nurse cherisheth her own children. We comforted and charged every one of you as a father doth his children v. 11. This idea of parental care and concern reveals just how much Paul loved these young believers and desired their spiritual growth and development. The same language is used by Paul of Christ himself in His relation to the church in Eph. ch. 5 v. 29. As in the natural, so in the spiritual. A new born baby

demands food in order to grow. To be under-nourished is to be deprived of that which is vital to healthy development. To cherish, is to draw to one's bosom. For illustration see I Kings ch. 1 v. 3. The thought is to comfort and love, which Paul was always ready to do. Our risen Lord has made full provision for his church, and under Him the preacher too should attend to the needs of young converts, so that they may no more be as children tossed about by every wind of teaching, Eph. ch. 4. v. 14.

Finally, the preachers

6. CONDUCT

generally is spoken of in verse 10. Ye are witnesses, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. I Cor. ch. 6 v. 14. Renouncing the things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. II Cor. ch. 4 v. 2. so much so He could say "be ye followers of me as I also follow Christ."

The standard is certainly a high one, but unless we as preachers approximate to this, we can hardly expect blessing, such as Paul did, or get the same response from his pupils, of which, here are a few.

1. They received it.
2. They revered it.
3. They rejoiced in it.
4. They reflected it.
5. They repeated it.

The first thing about these pupils of Paul was their preparedness to hear what he had to say, and having heard they accepted it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. which also worketh effectually in them that believe. I Thess. ch. 2 v. 13. As he planted the good seed God gave the increase. It is not for us to analyze the soil, but to sow the seed, being assured that some will fall into good ground and bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

The parable of 'The sower' Luke ch. 8. verses 4-15. seems intended to assure the disciples that though there may be

disappointment at men's attitude to the gospel generally, some will fall on good ground, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold, which will more than recompense the labourer in the day he stands before the judgement seat of Christ. This cheered the heart of Paul. see Rom. ch. 1. v. 13. also Col. ch. 1 v. 6 and his joy is expressed in verse 9 of this chapter to the Thessalonians. 'Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.' So be of good cheer, dear Sunday school teacher, and tract distributor, Your labour is not in vain. Ye shall reap if ye faint not.

Closely allied to this truth of receiving is that of *reverencing* the Word of God. Referring again to the book of Nehemiah, we are informed in chapter 8 and verse 5 that when Ezra opened the book of the law all the people stood up, and though he read from early morning, v. 3. marg. until noon, the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. So Paul in writing to Timothy exhorts him to give attendance to reading. I Tim. ch. 4. v. 13. To the Colossians he writes 'When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.' It is a joy to every spiritually minded person to hear the scriptures read nicely in public, but when did any of us last hear a whole New Testament letter read in the assembly gathering. To our shame, be it said, that so often our reaction to lengthy readings is one of restlessness, and marked irreverence.

The third thing to observe in their attitude toward the scriptures, is given in verse 6 of chapter 1. They received it with *joy* of the Holy Ghost. Whoever penned the 119th Psalm knew something of this, for in verse 162 he says, "I *rejoiced* at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Isaiah also declares "With joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation." Ch. 12 v. 3. One of the key words of the Acts of the apostles is *Joy*. Scripture references; Ch. 8 v. 8: v. 39: ch. 13 v. 48: ch. 16 v. 34: and in all his epistles Paul expresses his joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. ch. 5 v. 11. see also Phil. ch. 4 v. 4. John too in his first epistle informs his readers, that the ultimate design of the apostolic testimony is to bring men into fellowship with God, that their joy might be full.

I John ch. 1 vv. 1-4. Happy are the people that know the joyful sound.

Verse 7 tells us that they not only rejoiced in it, but they also *Reflected* it. Their manner of life paid tribute to the transforming power of the gospel. They became imitators of Paul and his companions v. 6 and thus of Christ himself. Inseparable to this is the final thought of *Repeating* it. "From you sounded out the word of the Lord." v. 8. Of the early christians it is said, "They went everywhere preaching the word." Acts 8 v. 4. To Timothy Paul writes. "Preach the word, in season, out of season." II Tim. 4 v. 2. Every christian church should be a centre of evangelism, giving evidence of its new life in Christ. *Receiving. Reverencing. Rejoicing. Reflecting and Repeating.*

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

(6) THE GRACE OF GOD

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

'GRACE' is a great word, an all-inclusive word, because it is the word most truly expressive of God's character and attitude in relation to man. Grace is found over 150 times in the New Testament and Paul refers to it 130 times directly or indirectly. Grace was the secret of his life and the keynote of his teaching. Trace the eleven references to "grace" in Ephesians.

It comes from two or three roots in the Hebrew and Greek. The root seems to mean 'to give pleasure', both to the Giver and to the receiver.

THE MEANING OF GRACE

It is the free, spontaneous, unmerited love of God to sinful man. Grace is first, a quality of graciousness in the Giver, and then a quality of gratitude in the recipient which makes him gracious to others, e.g. 2 Sam. 9. Grace when applied to God, the Supreme Giver, two aspects are presented:—

1. *It expresses the Divine Attitude* to man as guilty and condemned. Grace means God's favour and goodwill towards us. Luke 1.30; permanently favoured or graced Luke 1.28. Grace is eternal; planned before it was exercised, purposed before it was imparted 2 Tim. 1.9. It is sovereign, because

God exercises it toward and bestows it upon whom He pleases—Rom. 5.21. It comes from the throne of grace, Heb. 4.16.

Being unmerited favour, it is exercised in a sovereign manner Exod. 33.19; Gen. 6.8. It is free, (no conditions required) for none can purchase it—Rom. 3.24. It is spontaneous and generous and abiding. Paul was a grace-made man, 1 Cor. 15.10.

2. *It expresses Divine Action* to man as needy and helpless. Not only benevolence but benefaction; not solely good will, also good work, Phil. 1.6. It is God's free bounty; His spontaneous gift which causes pleasure and produces blessing, Rom. 5.15; Rom. 12.6; 1 Cor. 4.7.

It is distinguished from mercy which is related to misery and to (negatively) non-deserving. Grace is related to redemption and to (positively) undeserving, Eph. 2.5,8. R.V.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GRACE

There is no grace in heathen religions. It comes from God through His Son, our Lord and Saviour. John 1.17; Acts 15.40; Acts 18.27; 20.24. God is the God of all grace 1 Peter 5.10; the giver of grace Ps. 84.11; Jas. 1.17. Grace was upon Christ Luke 2.40; John 3.34. He spoke with grace Ps. 45.2; Luke 4.22. He was full of grace John 1.14,17. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace Heb. 10.29. The Father is the fountain of all grace, the Son is the channel of grace and the Holy Spirit is the administrator of grace.

The manifestation of grace commenced in God's purpose, 2 Tim. 1.9; is embodied in God's revelation in Christ Tit. 2.11; and declared in the Gospel Acts 20.24.

It is God's mercy pitying; e.g. Saul Acts 9.1; 1 Tim. 1.13; the Corinthians 1 Cor. 6.9-11. Grace is God's wisdom planning, before the world began Eph. 1.4; from the foundation of the world Rev. 13.8. Among the Jews a Saviour was prepared for the world and among the Gentiles the world was prepared for the Saviour. It is fully manifested in God's love providing salvation John 3.16. When Christ appeared He was the revelation of the grace of God bringing, not sending, salvation, for His character was "full of grace and truth." In Christ it is saving grace, Matt. 1.21; Eph. 2.4-7; no merit, no effort and no payment Eph. 2.9. It is sanctifying grace, suggested by the word "Christ" which means 'Anointed'. We have fulness of grace in and

from Christ John 1.16; Col. 2.10. Being 'Lord' His is Sovereign grace Rom. 5.17; 14.9. Grace reigns by Jesus Christ and He has power and resources to enable us to live for Him and serve Him. Phil. 4.13.

THE MINISTRATIONS OF GRACE

There is the election of grace which is in opposition to works and worthiness Rom. 11.5,6; 2 Thess. 2.13. The latter text tells us why we are saved; and how we are saved. Like Paul we are called by grace Gal. 1.15; Rom. 8. v.30; 2 Tim. 1.9. Grace brings salvation Tit. 2.11, and effects justification Tit. 3.7; Rom. 3.24. It is linked with predestination Eph. 1.5,6. It is the source of faith Acts 18.27; of forgiveness Eph. 1.7; it secures acceptance Eph. 1.6,8; gives us a standing before God Rom. 5.2; and an inheritance in Christ Acts 20.32. It gives us consolation and hope 2 Thess. 3.16.

Grace, like the Good Samaritan, not only meets the present emergency, but provides for daily and future blessing. Available to us in time of need Heb. 4. v. 16; establishment against error Heb. 13.9. It delivers us from the dominion of sin Rom. 6.14; it is necessary to the service of God Heb. 12.28; we should grow in grace 2 Pet. 3.18; and be strong 2 Tim. 2.1.

THE MEASURE OF GRACE

It is described as great, Acts 4.33; sovereign Rom. 5.21; free Rom. 3.24; rich Eph. 1.7; 2.7; all sufficient 2 Cor. 9.8; 12.9; and is increased Jas. 4.6; 2 Peter. 1.2. It is abundant Rom. 5.17,20; 2 Cor. 4.15; 9.8,14. God's grace is manifold; there is teaching grace for living, and sustaining grace for trials, 2 Cor. 12.9.

"Grace," says Spurgeon, "is the morning and evening star of our experience. Grace puts us in the way, helps us by the way, and takes us all the way."

MISUNDERSTANDING OF GRACE

(1) *Law*. This rule of life was revealed from God and accepted by Israel at Sinai. The law is held in contrast with the teachings of grace John 1.17. Contrasting the Decalogue with Grace in 2 Cor. 3. 3-16, seven things are contrasted; see also Gal. 5.18; Eph. 2.15; Col. 2.14.

False teachers who came to Galatia proclaimed a mingling of grace and law Gal. 1.6-8; 3.2,3. The law curses Gal. 3.10; grace redeems from that curse 3.13. Law says, do and

thou shalt live, Luke 10.26,28; grace says, believe and live John 5.24. These are only a few contrasts. Rom. 6.14.

(2) *Works*. Salvation is by the grace of the Creator rather than by the works of the creature. Salvation by grace precludes the idea of any works either great or small, moral or ceremonial, Luke 18.10-14; Rom. 11.6 R.V.; Eph. 2.9.

(3) *Debt or Obligation*. Grace excludes the principle of debt or obligation. Salvation by grace means that God is not obligated to save Rom. 4.4,5. Salvation is always presented as a Gift, an unrecompensed favour, a pure benefit from God. John 10.28; Rom. 6.23.

(4) *Ceremonialism*. The Jewish element in the early Church was slow to abandon the law and its ceremonies, a double standard is revealed in the first council of the Church in Jerusalem, Acts 15.1-2, 5,7, 19-21; 21.19-26.

(5) *Antinomianism*. There are two dangers concerning grace; one is the danger of frustrating it, the other of abusing it. We frustrate grace when we teach that righteousness comes by keeping the law Gal. 2.21. We abuse grace when we use it to justify a life of sin Rom. 6.1,2. Grace not only reaches us as sinners but teaches us what we should loathe, how we should live and for whom we should look, Titus 2.11-13.

OUR RESPONSE TO GRACE

Having received grace 2 Cor. 6.1, we should continue in it Acts 13.43; share it Phil. 1.7; be growing in it 2 Pet. 3.18; finding it at the throne Heb. 4.16; standing in it 1 Pet. 5.12; singing with it Col. 3.16; speech ruled by it Col. 4.6. We should be enjoying it 1 Pet. 3.7; and yet expecting it 1 Pet. 1.13; be liberal through it 2 Cor. 8.19; and witnessing to it Eph. 3.8; Acts 20.24 and be glad when we see it in others Acts 11.23.

Our life is to be a Monument of Grace. All that we are, have, do and become is of grace, and we are so to live that our lives are to be to the "glory of His grace" Eph. 1.6. It should be a power in our life Luke 2.40; Acts 4.33.

Our lips are to be the Mouthpieces of Grace. We are to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God Acts 20.24; be proud of the Gospel Rom. 1.16. It should govern our speech Col. 4.6; and enable us to sing to God Col. 3.16.

Our love is to be a Means of Grace. There is no means

of grace to compare with a Christ-like spirit. God's love is only made available for others through his saints. His love in our hearts will lead to the love of others, and all our relationships will be sweetened, hallowed and transfigured. Grace will make us gracious in our dealings and enable us to avoid the spirit of hardness and severity, and manifest the spirit of forgiveness and patience.

Our Labour is to be a Messenger of Grace. Like Paul this grace is our Companion in labour and the Spirit of God endows us with the gifts of grace to minister to others 1 Cor. 15.10.

Our service is the outflow of the grace of God in the heart. Grace humbles pride, incites hope, inspires to service, and glories God.

"GRACE" - Gives us salvation Eph. 2.8; Revealed in Christ 2 Cor. 8.9; Abundant 1 Tim. 1.14; Comes from God our Father Eph. 1.2; Enjoyed by all saints Phil. 4.23.

Oh, let Thy grace inspire
My soul with strength Divine !
May all my powers to Thee aspire,
And all my days be Thine !

Philip Doddridge.

PRAYER AND THE PRAYER MEETING

by C. H. M. (continued)

Let us turn to Luke 11. "And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his *importunity* he will rise and give him as much as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Verses 5-10.

These words are of the very highest possible importance,

inasmuch as they contain part of our Lord's reply to the request of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray." Let no one imagine for a moment that we should dare to take it upon ourselves to teach people how to pray. God forbid! Nothing is further from our thoughts. We are merely seeking to bring the souls of our readers into direct contact with the Word of God—the veritable sayings of our blessed Lord and Master—so that, in the light of these sayings, they may judge for themselves as to how far our prayers and our prayer-meetings come up to the divine standard.

What, then, do we learn from Luke 11? What are the moral conditions which it sets before us? In the first place it teaches us to be *definite* in our prayers. "Friend, lend me three loaves." There is a positive need felt and expressed. There is the one thing before the mind, and on the heart; and to this one thing he confines himself. It is not a long rambling, desultory statement about all sorts of things. It is distinct, direct, and pointed. I want three loaves; I cannot do without them; I must have them; I am shut up; the case is urgent; the time of night—all the circumstances give definiteness and earnestness to the appeal. He cannot wander from the one point, "Friend, lend me three loaves."

No doubt it seems a very untoward time to come—"midnight."

Everything looks discouraging. The friend has retired for the night—the door is shut—his children are with him in bed—he cannot rise. All this is very discouraging; but still the definite need is pressed. He must have the three loaves.

Now, we cannot but doubt that there is a great practical lesson here which may be applied, with immense profit, to our prayers and our prayer-meetings. Must we not admit that our gatherings for prayer suffer sadly from long, rambling, desultory prayers? Do we not frequently give utterance to a whole host of things of which we do not really feel the need, and which we have no notion of waiting for at all? Should we not sometimes be taken very much aback were the Lord to appear to us, at the close of our prayer-meeting, and ask us, "What do you really want Me to give or to do?"

We feel most thoroughly persuaded that all this demands our serious consideration. We believe it would impart great

earnestness, freshness, glow, depth, reality, and power to our prayer-meetings, were we to attend with something definite on our hearts, as to which we could invite the fellowship of our brethren. Some of us seem to think it necessary to make one long prayer about all sorts of things—many of them very right and very good, no doubt—but the mind gets bewildered by the multiplicity of subjects. How much better to bring one subject before the throne, earnestly urge it, and pause, so that the Holy Spirit may lead out others in like manner, either for this same thing, or something else equally definite.

Long prayers are terribly wearisome; indeed, in many cases, they are a positive affliction. It will perhaps be said that we must not prescribe any time to the Holy Spirit. Far away be the monstrous thought! Who would venture upon such a piece of daring blasphemy? But how is it we never find long prayers in Scripture? The most marvellous prayer that ever was uttered in this world can be slowly, calmly, and impressively read in less than five minutes. We refer to the Lord's prayer in John 17. And as to the prayer which the Lord taught His disciples, it can be uttered in less than a minute. See also the comprehensive prayer of the disciples in Acts 4. 24-30; and those two marvellous prayers of the inspired apostle in Ephesians 1 and 3. Indeed, we may say without exaggeration, that if all the prayers recorded in the New Testament were read consecutively, they would not occupy nearly so much time as we have frequently known to be occupied by a single prayer in some of our so-called prayer-meetings.

Let it then be definitely borne in mind that "long prayers" are not found in Scripture. They are referred to no doubt, but it is in terms of withering disapproval. And we may further add, that during very many years of close observation, we have invariably noticed that the prayers of our most spiritual, devoted, intelligent, and experienced brethren have been characterized by brevity, definiteness, and simplicity. This is right and good. It is according to Scripture, and it tends to edification, comfort, and blessing. Brief, fervent, pointed prayers impart great freshness and interest to the prayer-meeting; but, on the other hand, as a general rule, long and desultory prayers exert a most depressing influence upon all.

But there is another very important moral condition set forth in our Lord's teaching in Luke 11, and that is "importunity."* He tells us that the man succeeds in gaining his object simply by his importunate earnestness. He is not to be put off; he must get the three loaves. Importunity prevails even where the claims of friendship prove inoperative. The man is bent on his object; he has no alternative. There is a demand, and he has nothing to meet it: "I have nothing to set before my friend." In short, he will not take a refusal.

Now the question is, how far do we understand this great lesson? It is not, blessed be God, that He will ever answer us "from within." He will never say to us, "Trouble Me not"—"I cannot rise and give thee." He is ever our true and ready "Friend"—"a cheerful, liberal, and unupbraiding Giver." All praise to His holy name! Still, He encourages importunity, and we need to ponder His teaching. There is a sad lack of it in our prayer-meetings. Indeed, it will be found that in proportion to the lack of definiteness is the lack of importunity. The two go very much together. Where the thing sought is as definite as the "three loaves," there will generally be the importunate asking for it, and the firm purpose to get it.

The simple fact is, we are too vague, and as a consequence, too indifferent in our prayers and prayer-meetings. We do not seem like people *asking for what they want, and waiting for what they ask*. This is what destroys our prayer-meetings, renders them pithless, pointless, powerless; turning them into teaching or talking meetings, rather than deep-toned, earnest prayer-meetings. We feel convinced that the whole church of God needs to be thoroughly aroused in reference to this great question; and this conviction it is which compels us to offer these hints and suggestions, with which we are not yet done.

The more deeply we ponder the subject which has for some time been engaging our attention, and the more we consider the state of the entire church of God, the more convinced we are of the urgent need of a thorough awakening everywhere in reference to the question of prayer. We can-

* The word in this parable translated **importunity**, is literally, "shamelessness." He didn't care if he waked up all the people on the street. (Editor).

not—nor do we desire to—shut our eyes to the fact that deadness, coldness, barrenness, seem as a rule to characterize our prayer-meetings. No doubt we may find here and there a pleasing exception, but speaking generally, we do not believe that any sober, spiritual person will call in question the truth of what we state, namely, that the tone of our prayer-meetings is fearfully low, and that it is absolutely imperative upon us to enquire seriously as to the cause.

In what we have already said on this great, all-important, and deeply practical subject, we have ventured to offer to our readers a few hints and suggestions. We have briefly glanced at our lack of confidence; our failure in cordial unanimity; the absence of definiteness and importunity. We have referred in plain terms—and we must speak plainly if we are to speak at all—too many things which are felt by all the truly spiritual amongst us to be not only trying and painful, but thoroughly subversive of the real power and blessing of our gatherings for prayer. We have spoken of the long, tiresome, desultory, preaching prayers which, in some cases, have become so perfectly intolerable, that the Lord's dear people are scared away from the prayer-meeting altogether. They feel that they are only wearied, grieved and irritated, instead of being refreshed, comforted and strengthened; and hence they deem it better to stay away. They judge it to be more profitable, if they have an hour to spare, to spend it in the privacy of their closet, where they can pour out their hearts to God in earnest prayer and supplication, than to attend a so-called prayer-meeting, where they are absolutely wearied out with incessant, powerless hymn-singing or long, preaching prayers.

Now, we more than question the rightness of such a course. We seriously doubt if this be at all the way to remedy the evils of which we complain. Indeed, we are thoroughly persuaded it is not. If it be right to come together for prayer and supplication—and who will question the rightness?—then surely it is not right for any one to stay away merely because of the feebleness, failure, or even folly of some who may take part in the meeting. If all the really spiritual members were to stay away on such grounds, what would become of the prayer-meeting? We have very little idea of how much is involved in the elements which compose a meeting. Even though we may not take

part audibly in the action, yet, if we are there in a right spirit, there really to wait upon God, we marvellously help the tone of the meeting.

Besides, we must remember that we have something more to do in attending a meeting than to think of our own comfort, profit, and blessing. We must think of the Lord's glory. We must seek to do His blessed will, and try to promote the good of others in every possible way; and neither of these ends, we may be assured, can be attained by our deliberately absenting ourselves from the place where prayer is wont to be made.

We repeat, and with emphasis, the words, "*deliberately absenting ourselves*"—staying away because we are not profited by what takes place there. Many things may crop up to hinder our being absent—illness, domestic duties, lawful claims upon our time, if we are in the employment of others. All these things have to be taken into account; but we may set it down as a fixed principle, that *the one who designedly absents himself from the prayer-meeting is in a bad state of soul*. The healthy, happy, earnest, diligent soul will be sure to be found at the prayer-meeting.

But all this conducts us, naturally and simply, to another of those moral conditions at which we have been glancing in this little article. Let us turn for a moment to the opening lines of Luke 18. "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*: saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." (Verses 1-8).

Here, then, we have pressed upon our attention the important moral condition of *perseverance*. "Men ought *always* to pray, and *not to faint*." This is intimately connected with the definiteness and importunity to which we have already referred. We want a certain thing; we cannot

do without it. We importunately, unitedly, believingly, and perseveringly, wait on our God until He graciously sends an answer, as He most assuredly will, if the moral basis and the moral conditions be duly maintained.

But we must persevere. We must not faint, and give up, though the answer does not come as speedily as we might expect. It may please God to exercise our souls by keeping us waiting on Him, for days, months, or perhaps years. The exercise is good. It is morally healthful. It tends to make us real. It brings us down to the roots of things. Look, for example, at Daniel. He was kept for "three full weeks" waiting on God, in profound exercise of soul. "In those days was I Daniel mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three full weeks were fulfilled."

All this was good for Daniel. There was deep blessing in the spiritual exercise through which this beloved and honoured servant of God was called to pass during those three weeks. And what is specially worthy of note is, that the answer to Daniel's cry had been despatched from the throne of God at the very beginning of his exercise, as we read at verse 12: "Then said he unto me, Fear not Daniel; for *from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.* But "*—how marvellous and mysterious is this!—*" the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one-and-twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days."

All this is full of interest. Here was the beloved servant of God mourning, chastening himself, and waiting upon God. The angelic messenger was on his way with the answer. The enemy was permitted to hinder; but Daniel continued to wait. He prayed, and fainted not; and in due time the answer came.

Is there no lesson here for us? Most assuredly there is. We, too, may have to wait long in the holy attitude of expectancy, and in the spirit of prayer; but we shall find the time of waiting most profitable for our souls. Very

often our God, in His wise and faithful dealing with us, sees fit to withhold the answer, simply to prove us as to the reality of our prayers. The grand point for us is to have an object laid upon our hearts by the Holy Ghost—an object, as to which we can lay the finger of faith upon some distinct promise in the Word, and to persevere in prayer until we get what we want. “Praying *always* with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and *watching* thereunto *with all perseverance* and supplication for all saints.” Ephesians 6. 18.

All this demands our serious consideration. We are as sadly deficient in perseverance as we are in definiteness and importunity. Hence the feebleness of our prayers, and the coldness of our prayer-meetings. We do not come together with a definite object, and hence we are not importunate, and we do not persevere. In short, our prayer-meetings are often nothing but a dull routine, a cold mechanical service, something to be gone through, a wearisome alteration of hymn and prayer, hymn and prayer, causing the spirit to groan beneath the heavy burden of mere profitless bodily exercise.

We speak plainly and strongly. We speak as we feel. We must be permitted to speak without reserve. We call upon the whole church of God, far and wide, to look this great question in the face—to look to God about it—to judge themselves about it. Do we not feel the lack of power in all our gatherings? Why those barren seasons at the Lord’s supper? Why the dullness and feebleness in the celebration of that precious feast which ought to stir the very deepest depths of our renewed being? Why the lack of unction, power, and edification in our public readings—the foolish speculations and the silly questions which have been advanced and answered for many years? Why those varied evils on which we have been dwelling, and which are being mourned over almost everywhere by the truly spiritual? Why the barrenness of our Gospel services? Why are souls not smitten down under the Word? Why is there so little power?

Brethren, beloved in the Lord, let us rouse ourselves to the solemn consideration of these weighty matters. Let us not be satisfied to go on with the present condition of things. We call upon all those who admit the truth of what we have

been putting forth in these pages, on "Prayer and the Prayer-meeting" to unite in cordial, earnest, united prayer and supplication. Let us seek to get together according to God; to come as one man and prostrate ourselves before the mercy-seat, and perseveringly wait upon our God for the revival of His work, the progress of His gospel, the ingathering and upbuilding of His beloved people. Let our prayer-meetings be really prayer-meetings, and not occasions for giving out our favourite hymns, and starting our fancy tunes. The prayer-meeting ought to be the place of expressed need, and expected blessing—the place of expressed weakness and expected power—the place where God's people assemble with one accord, to take hold of the very throne of God, to get into the very treasury of heaven, and draw thence all we want for ourselves, for our households, for the whole church of God, and for the vineyard of Christ.

Such is the true idea of a prayer-meeting, if we are to be taught by Scripture. May it be more fully realised amongst the Lord's people everywhere! May the Holy Spirit stir us all up, and press upon our souls the value and importance of definiteness, importunity, and perseverance, in all our prayers and prayer-meetings!

THE APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS

by GEORGE GOODMAN, Tunbridge Wells

There is no special ecclesiastical value to the word "elder" in Scripture. It is the comparative form of the word "old." It is used of the "elders of the people" in the Gospels (Matt. 16. 21 ; 21 . 23) and of the older women (1 Tim. 5.2) and of the Old Testament saints (Heb. 11 . 2).

Yet it is these elder brethren who are bidden to "feed the flock . . . taking (R.V., exercising) the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God (1 Peter 5. 1-3, R.V.); not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither lording it over God's heritage, but being

ENSAMPLES TO THE FLOCK."

These "elders in the Assemblies" are also called "bishops" (see Acts 20. 28, R.V.; Titus 1. 5-7). The word "*elder*" signifying their qualification and the word "*bishop*" their work, that is, that of feeding and tending the flock.

In the beginning, the Apostles appointed the elders, and Paul instructed Titus to do the same (1. 5), but when

directions had been given by the Spirit in the Epistles on the subject, and the Apostolic authority had ceased, this became unnecessary.

The word "ordain" used in the A.V., is a translation of no less than ten Greek words (See Bullinger's Lexicon) and does not imply any formal authoratative ordination service. Some one had to do the work of pointing out the suitable persons and setting them to work, and this the apostles or their agents (*e.g.*, Titus) did at the first.

It need scarcely be said that mere

AGE IS NO SUFFICIENT QUALIFICATION

for an elder. He must be such as is described in Titus 1. 6-9, and 1 Tim. 3. 1-7. He must be blameless and have a good testimony, must be temperate and self-controlled, not given to wine nor greedy of gain, the husband of one wife, given to hospitality, and apt to teach. He must be a holy man (Titus 1. 8).

It will be seen at once that the kind of person who is an elder called to take oversight in the Churches, is no common individual. Such godly old men are comparatively rare, and it should not be difficult to recognise them. Happy is that Assembly in which they are found.

The question of age is, of course, a matter of degree—

EXPERIENCE AND GRACE

are what is needed—a novice is to be refused.

There are those who contend that the Scriptures do not recognise an Oversight or acknowledged body of elders, but this cannot be maintained in the light of 1 Tim. 4. 14, where we have the Presbytery recognised. The word in the Greek is "*Presbuterion*," and is defined in Bullinger as "an Assembly of aged men, council of elders," and in Young as "an Assembly of elders."

Others contend that an Oversight meeting has no warrant in Scripture, but again it is quite impossible to contend this in the light of Acts 20. 17, and 21. 18, where we read of the elders being called together on business.

Even without such an example it is foolish to suggest that those who are responsible for godly order should not meet together to take counsel.

The question then arises,

HOW SHALL THESE ELDERS BE SELECTED
and by whom, and how appointed.

In practice, two occasions arise

1. When *a new assembly* is formed, and
2. When elders already exist in an Assembly, and *it is desired to add to their number.*

Let us suppose that in a new district a number have been converted by the preaching of the Gospel and it is proposed to constitute an Assembly. The evangelist who has been used of God (if there be only one) would probably advise and instruct in the Scriptures on the subject, but he must not assume authority nor dictate.

The Christians contemplating such an Assembly (including the new converts) should meet together to wait on the Lord for guidance, and in such a gathering those who were elders (godly, experienced men) should be held in honour, listened to with respect and looked to for guidance. They it is who are directed to *guide*.

If there are none such it would be unwise to constitute an Assembly—for the responsibility for godly order and discipline, receiving and rejecting, is very great and must not be attempted by novices. Let the few believers wait on the Lord to send them needed help.

ASSEMBLIES ARRANGED BY ONE MAN

perhaps a discontent from some other gathering, are *not properly constituted Churches*.

If doubt arise as to the true qualification of any one person, the Church can be heard, and those who are admittedly elders will then decide whether or not they can receive him as an elder into their company to share in the work.

Some have spoken of election by a show of hands, but this is, of course, an appeal to the younger (and often the women) to outvote the elders to whom the guidance is committed.

The word "*Cheirotonoe*" in Acts 14. 23, and 2 Cor. 8. 19, is sometimes quoted as authority for ordination by show of hands. It is true the word is derived from the Greek for stretching out the hand, but derivation is not always a safe guide to the present meaning of a word, as anyone instructed in the study of words knows. The language is used figuratively of God in Acts 4. 30. It cannot be pressed.

In the case, then, of

ADDITIONAL ELDERS

in an Assembly already constituted, the course to adopt seems simple. Any who are in fact elders, and have shown by godly concern and care for the members of the flock that they desire to be bishop should be recognised by the acting elders and invited to join their fellowship.

1 Tim. 3. 1 reads : "This is a true (faithful, R.V.) saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop he desireth a good work."

This is a wrong translation. The translators had express instructions not to alter the ecclesiastical terms and so retained the words "*office of*" which are not found in the original. Darby translates the verse, "The word is faithful : if any one

ASPIRES TO EXERCISE OVERSIGHT

he desires a good work."

It is not office, but work that such a loving soul desires. He has the heart of a shepherd and yearns with godly concern over the flock.

The Lord raise up many such among us. No humble-minded godly man would put himself forward as an elder, he would rather observe the Lord's principle in Luke 14. 7-11. Nor would he suffer himself to be made a candidate for the position by others.

The method of recognition is immaterial so long as it is done decently and in order. The elders should inform the Assembly of their decision, and unless some objection hitherto unknown to them were made, the Church should submit in the fear of God to the guidance (Heb. 13. 17).

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward."

The Jews thought a prophet higher than a priest or a king, because the prophet, in the name of the Lord, gave commands to the priest and the king. When the priest went astray the prophet rebuked him, and when the king went astray the prophet rebuked him; and the prophet was thought to be above the priest or the king as coming forth from God to men; while the priest went forth, as it were, from man to God. If you take a prophet into your house you are giving him strength to testify, providing as it were, life, and strengthening him to endure, and you will be counted on a level with the prophet, and his reward will be given you.—DR. A. T. PIERSON.

THE SIGH . . . **of the . . . PRISONER**

ALONE — within a cold dark prison cell
Reality — and present mood both tell, 2
He sits with downcast spirit, as he muses
On the One he thought he knew so well.
The One of whom in triumph recently he spoke
When proclamation made, and news he broke
Of One who came from heaven, God's own Lamb,
Provision great for every fallen man. 3

“THIS IS HE” conviction's voice was heard, 4
The Living One, the Everlasting Word,
This Man of preference, to Whom he'd bow 5
Unworthily, yet gladly serve Him now.
Unable e'en as slave to bear those shoes 6
Or, stooping down, the latchet to unloose. 7

Those feet beheld on Jordan's banks 8
Had fixed his gaze, as one who looks on gold. 9
And so inspired him, till his lips had told
That “THIS IS HE”, and having said, 10
His own disciples to this One had led. 11

But now,—the loneliness he feels within his soul,
And waves of bitter disappointment roll
Across his memory, mingled with doubts and fears

And questioning, —until at last
Two messengers are sent, 12
At once they to this seeming stranger went. 13

“ART THOU HE?” they say enquiringly, 14
As if like heathens, they might doubt His word,
“Or look we for another”—(who 15
Conforming to their plans and schemes
Would synchronise with all their man-made dreams).

No sudden echo would respond 16
To end their grave despondencies,
But voice of Grace Divine
Would utter, as it always did
To prove with line 'pon line, 17
The holy precept which
Would claim
Unique Identity. 18

“Go tell” authoritative word replied 19
That lonely hearts have now been satisfied;
That blind eyes see, some from the dead are brought,
The deaf do hear, and lame are loosed to walk.
Go tell him things that ye now hear and see,
Tell John that he shall blessed be 20
If unoffended he will trust in ME.

The Lord's reaction to this scene would teach
A heavenly lesson, in regard to each
Of His own servants, listen now as He
Describes His servant with such clarity. 21
No matching doubts as John's, but words enthralling
Would validate John's present gift and calling.

“THIS IS HE”, oh hear familiar tone, 22
As Master would His servant gladly own.
This one of whom 'tis written, sent before
As messenger and prophet, yet much more,
A willing one, once sent before My face
In preparation for My path of Grace. 23

Though now discouraged, yet My servant still,
No changeful human heart will thwart My will.
Though circumstances have his courage shaken,
No sheep of Mine shall from My hand be taken 24
Both tribulation and distress endorse
That upward calling, to fulfil his course 25
Though trials harsh bring suffering for My sake
My gifts and callings are without mistake. 26

—H. M. M.

The above resulted from a meditation on Luke, ch 7. The contrasting between a doubting, discouraged servant (v. 19) and his unchanging, unchangeable Lord (v. 27—28).

"WE CHANGE . . . HE CHANGES NOT." 27

—H. M. M.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Luke 3 v 19, 20. | 14. Luke 7 v 20. |
| Ps. 79 v 11, 102 v 19, 20. | 15. Luke 7 v 20. |
| Ex. 2 v 23. | 16. Luke 7 v 21, 22. |
| 2. Luke 3 v 20. | 17. Isaiah 28 v 13. |
| 3. John 1 v 29-34. | 18. Isaiah 61 v 1. |
| 4. John 1 v 30. | 19. Luke 7 v 22. |
| 5. John 1 v 27. | 20. Luke 7 v 23. |
| 6. Math. 3 v 11. | 21. Luke 7 v 24-28. |
| 7. John 1 v 27. | 22. Luke 7 v 27. |
| 8. John 1 v 36. | 23. Luke 7 v 27. |
| 9. S. of S. 5 v 15. | 24. John 10 v 28. |
| 10. John 1 v 30. | 25. Acts 14 v 22, 13 v 25. |
| 11. John 1 v 37. | Phil. 3 v 14 (Newb. Margin) |
| 12. Luke 7 v 19. | 26. Romans 11 v 29. |
| 13. Luke 7 v 20. | 27. Malachi 3 v 6. |

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES AND THE FLOCK

—Acts 20 : 28.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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HIS HOLINESS

The Christ

Dare mortals of a fallen, sinful race,
With puny intellect, essay to trace
In Christ, eternally immaculate,
The seeds of latent sin, investigate !

They say of Him, "He could, if He but chose"
Who, in His Manhood carried all our woes :
Begot a nature prone, though free from sin,
And by suggestion, carried it within !

Demonic doctrines, propagated free,
Assail God's Holy Word, infernally !
Could they 'but tarnish His claimed sinlessness,
'twould cancel His inherent holiness !

If Christ could sin, His claim to Deity
Is but an empty boast : duplicity.
If Christ could sin, He died for me in vain !
If heresy were fact, He ne'er had risen again !

Desist. Your claims unproveable, they be.
With sin, He never held affinity.
Vain mortals of a fallen, sinful kin :
For, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin."

John Campbell, Larkhall, 7-12-79.

A MAN IN CHRIST

by EDWARD ROBINSON, Exmouth

In the remarkable twelfth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul ('our apostle') tells of a unique and most interesting experience, a revelation he had received from God. This had taken place no less than fourteen years previously. During that space of time the apostle had kept silence, communicating to none an event of which we should all probably have gone hot-foot to report to friends as a matter of personal pride. This latter aspect doubtless governed Paul in keeping to himself so outstanding a mark of God's favour. He tells us also that in the wisdom of God there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, lest he should be exalted above measure. Though he besought thrice this was not removed, but the answer from the Lord was 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' And the response of the servant 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' (vv 7-9).

The precise nature of the communications received by Paul at that time are not disclosed to us: he says 'I know *a man in Christ*' (not 'knew' as in A.V., conscious knowledge, J.N.D.), 'such an one caught up to (as far as) the third heaven.' 'How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.' (vv 2, 4). That which he then heard was entirely suited to the heavenly conditions to which he had been transported, in modern parlance 'out of this world.' Perhaps in a coming day, when along with Paul in an even higher sphere (Christ ascended up far above all heavens), he will disclose to us that which he then heard. We remember that Paul was, as his Lord said of him, 'an elect vessel unto Me.' With no trace of false modesty or of fleshly pride, he fittingly describes himself as 'A MAN IN CHRIST.' Such a title involves both *status* and a corresponding quality of *state*. The status is the sovereign prerogative of God: the state is the practical answer to it, the product of the work of the Holy Spirit in one worthy to be so designated. There can be little doubt that this experience distinctly coloured the whole of the ministry of the apostle.

Another great influence upon him, occurring in his unconverted days, but doubtless later coming often to mind and profoundly affecting him is related. 'And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.' (Acts 7.58). Here surely is another well worthy of the designation 'A MAN IN CHRIST', Stephen, the first martyr. We hear little of this truly great servant of the Lord, but what we hear is most certainly calculated to promote a desire to draw upon the resources upon which he drew in such large measure, 'the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.' (Phil. 1.19). The apostle himself, in using such an expression, was conscious of the great need of this supply, even relating it to his own 'salvation', not from sin or its guilt, but to the preservation in its integrity of the unique body of truth which had been entrusted to him by the Head of the Church, as the apostle of the Gentiles : and the unfolding of the mystery of the Church.

Stephen, we are told in the previous chapter (Acts 6) was chosen as deacon, 'a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost and of power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.' But certain of the synagogue, unable to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke, brought false witnesses against him. 'And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.' (v. 15). Even his enemies cannot but pay tribute to the character of the man before them, angelic but fearless, speaking truth amidst the hostility of his hearers. There follows a long and trenchant discourse setting out with tremendous power and ability God's dealings with His people of old, beginning with Abraham and the patriarchs, going on to Moses and tracing the history of Israel through David and Solomon. Towards the end of this long chapter (7), he ends what is probably the most telling indictment of the people who had been so favoured with these words : 'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers : who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it? (vv 51.3).

The re-action of the council to this faithful word delivered

in the power of the Spirit of God, finally convicting them of the betrayal and murder of the Christ of God, sent for their deliverance, cut them to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 'But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.' (vv 55,56). At the outset of this remarkable discourse he had spoken of the *God of glory* appearing to Abraham: now he sees the *glory of God*, Jesus standing and the opened heavens. They cast him outside the city (where his Master had suffered, from Whom he took character so markedly) and stoned him. Even as his Lord had cried on the Cross 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit' (Luke 23.46), so Stephen, calling upon God ('invoking') says 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' and again, true to character, he cries with a loud voice (triumphant), kneeling, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge', in line with the crucified Saviour's words 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' The short history of Stephen thus teaches us how to live as a true Christian and also how to die. His glorious exit from this scene amidst the tumult and the hail of stones was with an inner peace as the divine record shows:— 'And when he had said this, *he fell asleep*'.

THE BEATITUDES

by E. L. H. OGDEN

Matthew 5, 1-12

The Beatitudes, with the entire discourse generally called 'The Sermon on the Mount', have frequently been misinterpreted by some as millennial teaching only. That they have no relevance today is however a fallacy which deprives the child of God of much that instructs, encourages and challenges; and it is a tacit denial of Paul's words to Timothy "all scripture is . . . profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Tim. 3.16.

That these gracious utterances by the Lord relate to the kingdom of the heavens does not confine them to a future revelation of that kingdom on earth; and there is no scriptural justification for linking them to a specific age or dispensation. The kingdom of the heavens speaks of the *realm*

of God's rule. The kingdom of God, a synonymous term, speaks of *rule* in God's realm. In other words, the terms introduce teaching concerning the rule of God in His realm. It is true to say, therefore, that when the Lord was on earth, the kingdom could be found there. Where Christ is acknowledged today, there is the kingdom residing within the heart. When He reigns on earth in a future dispensation, the kingdom will be there. Today's application is very practical and is for believers only in whom the rule of God is acknowledged.

In approaching the Beatitudes which introduce the discourse, it will be seen how relevant they are.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT: FOR THEIR'S IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

This is not a poverty of possession, but rather an attitude towards one's self, having nothing in which to glory. How different this attitude of mind is to that of the world in which affluence and prosperity in material things are the recognised aims of life. God looks for humility in His own. To the poor in spirit is this kingdom promised, and God dwells with such. (Isa. 57. 15). Moreover, He gives to them the authority of the kingdom; the right of possession to all who are humble in spirit. The Lord said to those to whom this would have applied, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14.14).

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN: FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

This follows in proper sequence. The poor in spirit acknowledge a spiritual condition. Those that mourn receive spiritual comfort in that condition. Again the words were not spoken in a natural sense, true though that may be, but rather in the spiritual sense. To mourn is the effect of self examination. Recognition of God's holiness is the cause, and a correct assessment of one's self causing mourning over sin is the result. Paul experienced the spirit of mourning when he cried "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death"? He mourned the strength of the flesh. Knowledge of the existence of its fruits causes mourning. It is not a knowledge without hope, however, for such mourning brings comfort, of which God Himself is the constant source.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK : FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

The word 'meek' is only used upon three other occasions :
(a) in relation to the disposition of the Lord when He entered Jerusalem, and the people proclaimed Him 'Blessed' (Matt. 21. 5-9).

(b) In relation to His character displayed in the Lord's invitation to the weary and heavy laden. (Matt. 11. 28-29).

(c) In relation to the conduct of the believing wife. 1 Pet. 3.4. The attribute of meekness should be seen in every believer through his disposition, character and conduct. He is required to show humility and gentleness in all his relationships. This is not weakness, but true spiritual meekness.

There is no doubt that the repentant believing Jew will inherit the earth in the millennial reign of Christ; but the believer has an inheritance also, of which the seal of the Holy Spirit is already the earnest, the guarantee of fulfilment. (Eph. 1. 13-14). While he may possess no land today, the truly meek person in Christ will always be content with what daily provision he has, knowing that spiritually he possesses all things in Christ while he waits for the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1.4). Although by the world's standards this would make him proud, it keeps him meek !

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS : FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.

This is a hunger and thirst to be desired, bringing the blessing of God. It is an enlargement of the promise of the Lord where the blessing of satisfaction was conditional to those who came. (John 6.35). Here the blessing is conditional to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Righteousness, with peace, comprises the kingdom of God. (Rom. 14.17). It is an attribute of God. It is His holy standard. Those who seek it desire that the principles of the kingdom shall be observed in their lives. To all such, the promise is "they shall be filled." The void that caused their hunger is satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ. That satisfaction comes from being right with God the righteous One. Right in all relationships with Him; free from the manifestation of sin in the life. May our hunger and thirst for this never be appeased or quenched !

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL : FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.

This Beatitude touches our relationship with others. Mercy is the attitude of undeserved grace, and attention toward one who has no claim whatsoever upon it. It means that the one who shows mercy does not demand his rights, however justified he may appear to be to do so.

The question of attitude towards law breakers is not involved here. It is not a matter of the system of justice overlooking flagrant breaches of the law of the land. Rather is it a matter of a personal attitude towards another in human relationships when the desire for vindication arises in the flesh. We are not to stand upon 'our rights' if we are to receive this blessing from God. To do so, could lead to vindictiveness, and not mercy.

We do not show mercy if we do not forgive our brother or sister in the Lord. It is not compatible with the rule of God in His realm. Indeed, our forgiveness should extend to all. Not to do so is contrary to the spirit of Christ Who "when He suffered, He threatened not." 1 Pet. 2.23.

The promise to the merciful is clear; "they shall obtain mercy." The repentant sinner first obtains mercy at the cross. To bestow it is God's prerogative. Showing it to others is the business of the child of God, who in doing so will continue to obtain it.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART : FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

This blessing has to do with the deep affections embodied in the word 'heart.' It is not concerned with wisdom or knowledge. It is not purity of wisdom or pure knowledge that brings the blessing of God. Rather is it purity of heart. It is an inner cleansing inherent in the word 'pure'; it is the state of heart enabling one to see God. A heart undivided in its affections, uncompromising in its attitudes, and un sinning in its actions. So defined, a pure heart is the condition for seeing God. Humanly speaking, this is a paradox. "No man hath seen God at any time." (John 1.18). Yet Moses endured, "seeing Him Who is invisible." (Heb. 11.27). So it is with the eye of faith that God can be seen by the pure in heart, as the blessedness of His presence is enjoyed day by day.

It is also a promise soon to be fulfilled, when in eternal purity we shall see the face of our beloved Lord, and seeing Him, we shall see God. (John 14.9).

BLESSED ARE THE PEACE MAKERS : FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Romans 14.17, already referred to, speaks of peace which, with righteousness, comprises the kingdom of God. The believer acknowledging the claims of the kingdom upon him now, must be a person of peace.

The war ridden history of the world would appear to denote a complete absence of peacemakers in it. There have, however, been many attempts through organisations and leagues to make and keep peace internationally, industrially and socially. That they have failed and will continue to fail lies in the human inability to fulfil the condition of this Beatitude. Only a child of God can be a peacemaker in the truest sense.

Peace is an attribute of God. (Heb. 13.20). It can only be established where ever God is given entire control in all circumstances. It is happening in the lives of individual believers who acknowledge the rule of God. It will happen on this earth when Christ Himself reigns as King, and His authority and rule is established and acknowledged throughout the world in that new kingdom relationship of peace. Until then, let all the children of God rejoice that He is their peace. (Eph. 2.14).

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE : FOR THEIR'S IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

It will already have been seen that possession of the kingdom is promised to the poor in spirit. (3). The subject of this Beatitude are the persecuted ones. The reason is for the sake of righteousness. For being righteous; for trying to be like Christ; for seeking to serve Him. (John 15. 18-21). The Bible contains many examples of those who suffered for the sake of righteousness. Persecution is the weapon in Satan's armoury against righteousness, and against those who by living witness and spoken and written testimony practise righteousness by a close walk with God. The persecution may not necessarily be physical, but by mental

pressures of antagonism in the workshop, office, college and school, the opposition of family against one solitary member of it witnessing faithfully and steadfastly for the Lord. There are also many who suffer physical persecution in many parts of the world for righteousness' sake, and they do so much need the prayers of us all.

All such, irrespective of the specific circumstances besetting them, being truly born of God, possess even now the liberty and joy of the kingdom, as God rules in their lives. These have the assurance of the knowledge of the inheritance of blessing throughout eternity.

BLESSED ARE YE, WHEN MEN SHALL REVILE YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND SHALL SAY ALL MANNER OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY, FOR MY NAME'S SAKE. REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDING GLAD: FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN.

These verses continue the theme of persecution. The Lord has brought the subject on to a personal level. It now embraces persecution by speech as well as deed, and not only is blessing to be an experience, there is to be a response in and from the heart in a rejoicing and glad spirit.

The persecuted are to rejoice and be exceeding glad because :

- (a) It is proof that they belong to Christ.
- (b) It is proof of their faithfulness to Christ.
- (c) It is proof of their identity with Christ.

The true believer does not, however, look upon persecution as a means of gaining a reward. This was not the purport of the Lord's statement. He knows, nevertheless, that however dark the days of persecution may be, he will for his faithfulness receive a crown of life. (Rev. 2.10). Paul was able to speak of his experiences as "light affliction which . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4.17).

We have considered those things which should mark the people of the kingdom. May the Lord enable us to live more consistently in accordance with those characteristics, and thus show in all humility the outworking of God's rule in His realm, our surrendered lives.

PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL

by the late JOHN RITCHIE

(Reprinted from the Believer's Magazine, 1919)

All true revival is of God, it is the operation of the Holy Ghost in the believer and in the church. Some have foolishly spoken of "getting up a revival," but a true revival of spiritual life and renewal of spiritual power is not "got up" but "brought down." Its coming is invariably in answer to earnest, united, believing prayer. We have never seen or heard of real times of reviving, renewing and refreshing coming upon a prayerless, self-satisfied and pompous people. The Lord's way still is to "revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57. 15). We may take it therefore that the first step toward a true revival is found in heart searching and self-judgement before God. This will result in that chastened, contrite and lowly condition, upon which God looks with approval, and upon which "like rain upon the mown grass and as showers that water the earth" (Isaiah 57. 15) His revivings and His refreshings come. It is ours to make room for the Lord to work, not to dictate to Him how and when He is to do it. The word, in the time of Elisha, to the widow, who was in poverty and in debt, but who had still one "pot of oil" in her possession, in the house, was, "Bring empty vessels not a few." And when these empty vessels were brought and the door shut upon them, the oil began to flow, until all the empty vessels brought were filled (2 Kings 4. 1-7). Then the oil ceased. God never wastes His mercies, when they are not wanted, or where there is no room to receive and use them to profit. That house, with the pot of oil still in it, yet unused, may surely speak to us of the heart and the church in which the Spirit of God and of power dwells, but yet waits for "empty vessels" to fill.

In the scene without, the same principle appears. The prophet said to the men who came in the time of drought seeking water, "Make this valley full of ditches" (2 Kings 3. 16). When these had been prepared the Lord filled them with water to overflowing.

There is power in the Spirit for all ministry: for awakening the lost, for keeping the saved in spiritual condition,

for sending the Gospel forth in converting power, and giving the Word unction and grip when ministered to the saints. But there must be "empty" vessels, men and women cleansed from sin, sanctified to God, vessels "meet for the Master's use," whom He can fill, and through whom He can work for the blessing of others. The solemn and searching question for each one is "AM I SUCH A VESSEL."

One possessed of a clear advent faith would choose for himself such an epitaph as that which Dean Alford composed for his tomb, "The inn of a traveller on his way to Jerusalem." Ah, yes, that is it! A pilgrim's portion, food and raiment and contentment therewith; the mansion which fortune has provided, or the cabin which penury has reared, each alike counted a hospice where one lodges as "a pilgrim and stranger in the earth;" and the grave a narrow inn whose windows look towards the sunrising, where the body of the sojourner sleeps till break of day—this, without question, is the ideal of the Christian life as outlined in the gospel.—WORDS IN SEASON.

HELPS FROM HEBREWS

by J. G. GOOD

This letter was written to deliver from the old order of things, i.e., Judaism, and by virtue of the subject matter of the epistle, prevent a return thereto. The writer contrasts all that pertained to the old order, with the excelling glory of the Son of God, the substance of every shadow, the anti-type of every type, the complete and final revelation of God. Again, this One is the Creator, Upholder, Sin Purger, Serpent Crusher, living in the power of an endless life with a priesthood which is intransmissible, of this One and no other can it be said, "Thou art a Priest for ever" Heb. 7-21.

The Hebrew believers were in the crucible of suffering, "a fight of afflictions" 10-32, they "took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" 10-34. The struggle to renounce that which was God given, the persecution which would follow such a decision is momentous. The writer in circumstances such as these, would remind them that the loss incurred by them as a result of embracing the rejected Lord Jesus Christ, was temporary, in contrast, the blessings gained were eternal and spiritual. "*We have* a great High

Priest" 4-14, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul" 6-19, and "Ye have in heaven" 10-34.

To encourage to this goal, the writer, with pathos and feeling, continually exhorts, "Let us," "also fear" 4-1, "hold fast" 4-14, "draw near" 4-16, "go on" 6-1, "draw near" 10-22, "hold fast" 10-23, "consider" 10-24, "lay aside" 12-1, "have grace" 13-13, "offer" 13-15, "go forth" 13-13.

Three of the foregoing exhortations form the basis of this present meditation;

1. LET US GO ON TO KNOW HIM. Ch. 6-1.

The Hebrews had failed to make progress in Divine things, they were spiritual dwarfs, the 'full growth' carries the thought of spiritual maturity, this is not in any way connected with age, but with spiritual experience. The Christian life is not static and stationary, but positive and progressive. The words of Paul in Phil. 3-12 'I press on' corroborate this thought of experimental knowledge being necessary to spiritual growth. There is a grave danger of thinking that the experience of being saved is sufficient, and the sole requirement of the child of God. The Word of God, teaches the opposite, the receiving of God's salvation is only the beginning, and unless we know in reality a 'daily salvation' 7-25, growing in grace will be a distinct impossibility. There can be no appetite for the Word of God unless there is a laying aside, of those things which retard spiritual growth. I Pet. 2-1. It is the desire of our God that by growing we shall reach maturity, "Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" Eph. 4-13. Hosea 6-3. There were three things that marked Samuel, the mantle of prophecy, the ephod of priesthood, and the coat of progress. Are we going on to know the Lord, let us 'sound,' Acts 27-28, and see if a change of course is required to bring us to the desired haven. Of this there can be no doubt that spiritual growth is the forerunner of spiritual prosperity. Psalm 144-12-15.

2. LET US GO IN—TO ENJOY HIM. Ch. 10-22.

What a truth is here emphasised, the free way of access in to the Holiest of All, the innermost shrine of God's abiding presence. The boldness of our entrance being the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the basis of this glorious fact, that the veil has been rent in the midst,

Luke 23-45, and from the top to the bottom, Matt. 27-51, the exhortation is given, "Let us draw near." The veil which typified the humanity of the Lord Jesus, that we might go in!

"We thank Thee for the precious blood,
Which purged our sins and brought us nigh,
All cleansed and sanctified to God,
Thy Holy Name to magnify"

We have three words used in this chapter, used in connection with the worshippers, worthy of note, the second verse, 'once purged' i.e. cleansed, verse ten, 'sanctified,' i.e. separated to God, and in verse fourteen, 'perfected' i.e. to perpetuity, (Newberry), once for all, the thought of finality, a finished fitness for the presence of God, not for a particular period of time, but FOR EVER. This grand truth of the ever open way into the presence of God, is enjoyed so little! Why? The reality of heavenly things, and the experimental knowledge of God's presence with us, will only be our portion in the measure that we 'draw near.' Is the Lord Jesus Christ, the living bright reality, He is prepared to be, to each one of us? This is a glorious possibility, if we are prepared to draw near into the peace of His presence to enjoy Him!

3. LET US GO OUT—TO BE WITH HIM. Ch. 13-13.

"Let us go forth UNTO HIM," the magnetic Person of Christ. How suggestive are the words recorded by Mark in the first chapter of his Gospel, and verse forty-five" and they came to Him from every quarter." The mal-contents of the nation of Israel went to the cave of Adullam, I Sam. Ch. 22-1. Why? David was there! Have we gone forth unto HIM! The 'camp' mentioned here refers to Judaism with all its religion, we must remember that the temple was still functioning when this epistle was written. The 'camp' today would indicate a place, where the Lordship of Christ is denied, and the Word of God has not its rightful place, Christendom at large would fall into this category! The writer uses strong language, as if in a final appeal, "we have an altar whereof they who are serving the tabernacle have no right to eat" verse ten. The levitical priesthood has no part in the Cross Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to partake of the blessings of the sin-offering of Calvary, there must be a forsaking of the camp of Judaism, these indeed

were solemn words to the Hebrew, and reproach of necessity would follow such a step. The sin-offering of Lev. 6-30 reminds us that when the blood was brought into the Holy Place by the High Priest, the flesh was not eaten, but burned without the camp. The place of separation and rejection is the portion of all who would be identified with the One who suffered without the gate. Let us go forth UNTO HIM!

The will of God is the centre of the obedient soul. God values not so much what man counts to be a great act of obedience, as ALL acts which imply and exemplify the centralisation of the will of God. We have an illustration of this in Matthew 10, which I dwell upon with great delight, where the rewards of God are given. We should expect that if Christ were going to refer to rewards. "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." Reception is the simplest act of which one is capable; to receive the Lord Jesus is simply to welcome Him, simply to take Him in, in the person of His ambassador or messenger.—DR. A. T. PIERSON.

ETERNAL LIFE

by JOHN NELSON DARBY

The simplest, fullest, and most direct statements of what eternal life is, are to be found, perhaps, in John's first epistle (the main object of the whole Epistle being to shew what that life is). "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ; for the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Here we have eternal life, first with the Father, but manifested in the Person of Christ. So in the last chapter : "This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "He is the true God, and eternal life." This, then, is most definite and distinct. The life is in the Son. He is eternal life. So the gospel : "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5). He is a life-giving Spirit ; He quickens whom He will.

All this is plain. Life is in the Son, or He is life. He has it in His Person ; He communicates it It is given of God, not won. "The wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6 : 23). "I," says Christ of His sheep, "am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

We may now see *how* it is obtained. It is the Spirit working by the word. We are born of the Spirit ; and "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1 : 18). The power of it is in the Spirit, Jesus' divine gift. It "is a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4). The Spirit is life if Christ be in us (Rom. 8). He was to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him (John 17).

A few accessory passages may be added. Titus 1 : 2, "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." There is another aspect in which eternal life is viewed, namely, its full accomplishment in glory, according to the full purpose of God. In this view we are, of course, not said to have it, but to follow after it. Thus Romans 6 : "Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." So Paul to Timothy : "Lay hold on eternal life."

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(7) THE LOVE OF GOD

It is good to remember in difficult days that "God is love" in spite of all appearances to the contrary; saying "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Look back over your own history as revealed to you by grace, and you will see one central fact growing large—God is love. Consider this revelation, the eternal fact that God is Love, not, God is loving.

"God is light" (1 John 1. 5) is the splendour of His perfection, He is the sum of all excellency. "God is love" (1 John 4.8; 2 Cor. 13.11), is the sublimity of His nature. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but the very essence of His moral nature, He is the source of all love.

Love is an exercise of the Divine Will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself (Deut. 7. 7,8).

Seven times in Deuteronomy God declared his love for Israel. His love is sovereign in its choice (4.37); selective in its objects (7.4); sacred in its remembrance (7.8); sanctifying in its outcome (10. 15,16); supplying in its bestowment (10.18); strong in its determination (23.5); and singular in its benediction (33.3)." (Dr. F. E. Marsh).

LOVE DESCRIBED

The love of God is SOVEREIGN (Deut. 7.8; 10.15) for it is uninfluenced by anything in the creature. There was nothing in the objects of His love to call it into exercise. Because God is love, He loves whom He pleases (Rom. 9. 13; Eph. 1. 4,5).

It is GREAT (Eph. 2. 4), both in its manifestation and in its ministry. It is indispensable and unbounded in its work (Rom. 5. 6-8). It is UNFAILING (Isa. 49. 15,16). A mother may cast her child away from her presence and forget to attend to its needs. God never does. His is Shepherd love (Isa. 63.9); and Father-love (John 14.21). Read Deut. 21 which unfolds the loving care of Jehovah for Israel. It is EVERLASTING (Jer. 31. 3). As God Himself is eternal so His love is unending in its character for He has chosen us in love (Eph. 1. 4, 5). Love covers our past, present and future, and where we cannot comprehend we can bow in adoring worship.

It is INFINITE (Eph. 3. 19). His love is without limit and without end. Who can scale the height or fathom its depth, its length and breadth defies measurement by our standard.

It is unknown in its fulness like the ocean, yet perfectly tender and responsive to its objects of mercy (Job 7. 17; John 11. 5).

It is SPONTANEOUS (Hosea 11. 1,4); uncaused and free. Constraining like a father teaching his child to walk inducing him by care and kindness. He loved us when we were loveless, quckened us and drew us to Himself.

It is IMMUTABLE (John 13. 1; Song of Songs 8. 6, 7). We live in a world of hatred; we are "His Own" and enjoy His love all our life-time down here. Immutable in its un-

changingness of character (1 John 4. 16,17). As with God Himself there is no variableness (Jas. 1. 17), so His love knows neither change nor diminution, nothing can stop its inexhaustible supply (Rom. 8. 32,39).

LOVE DISPLAYED

Consider this revelation, the eternal fact that God is love in His very nature. Love can be known only from the action it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son (1 John 4. 9,10). Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5.14; Eph. 2.4; 3.19; 5.25).

Love displayed in the **COMING OF CHRIST** (2 Cor. 8.9; Mark 10.45; John 10.10,11). The sacrifice of Christ displays the measure of God's love (John 3.16). Love was the impulsive power of Christ's incarnation (1 John 4. 9). Divine love is great, gracious and generous (Tit. 2.11-14; 3.4-7; Rom. 8.32). Genesis 22 illustrates the service and sacrifice of love. In Christ's coming into the world, love is revealed in its lowest stoop (1 John 4.9), and in its greatest sacrifice (1 John 3.16).

The foundation of God's love is holiness (Heb. 12.14). God's love must be the justification of His holiness. If God's nature is holy, His love must be a holy love. The fact of God's love is accepted by faith and is fully displayed in the reconciling work of Christ (2 Cor. 5. 18-21). His love never conflicts with His holiness (1 John 1.5).

Love seen in the **COMPASSION OF CHRIST** (Matt. 9. 36; 14.14). It reveals the tenderness of the heart of Christ and the power human grief has over Him. When He saw the scattered multitude (Matt. 9.36), toward the sick (Matt. 14. 14), toward the starving (Matt. 15.32); when He met the blind men (Matt. 20.34); when He saw the sorrowing widow (Luke 7.13); the sorrowing sisters (John 11. 33,35); and toward the sinful (Luke 19.41; John 8.11); the poor (Mark 8.2) and the needy (Heb. 5.2,7). Some people profess compassion but it does not move them.

Displayed at the **CROSS OF CHRIST** (Rom. 5.8; 8.32; Eph. 5.2,25).

In giving Himself for us (Gal. 2.20), in dying for us (John 15.13; 1 John 3.16; 4.9,10). These verses show that redemption is out of the Father's love. In the cross we see Divine mercy satisfying His law (Rom. 3.21-26). God himself pro-

vided the sacred satisfaction (Rom. 8.32). The death of the Lord Jesus was a necessity to meet a need (John 3.14,15).

Displayed **BY THE CHRISTIAN**. The love of God is dominating in its power (2 Cor. 5.14) and dedicating in its influence (1 John 4.16); illustrated in Jonathan's love for David (1 Sam. 18.1-3).

The Lord Jesus is the object of our love (1 Pet. 1.8). It is manifested in seeking Him (Song of Songs 3.4); in ministering to Him (Matt. 27.55; 25.40); in obeying Him (John 14. 15,21,23). Our love to the Lord should be affectionate (Song of Songs 1.3,4); ardent (Song of Songs 2.5); unquenchable (Song of Songs 8.7); sincere (Eph. 6.24); and in appreciation of His forgiving mercy (Luke 7.47). It is a mark of discipleship (John 13.34,35; 15.12; 17.10) and should be growing (Phil. 1.9).

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21). Have we lost the import and warmth of God's love? We are too introspective today, our feelings ebb and flow and we mourn. Drink deep and full of the love of God and you will not demand the impossible from earth's loves, and the love of wife and child, of husband and friend, will be holier and healthier and simpler and grander. We know how to keep ourselves in health, how to keep ourselves in knowledge and so on; but to keep ourselves in the love of God is a big order and our minds are exercised to know what Jude means by this exhortation. “Keep” means work. Live in the spiritual sphere of the love of God by faith, live near Him, delight yourself in Him. It is not “keeping on loving God” but live in the ocean fulness of the love of God (Rom. 8. 35,39).

THE MAN OF GOD

by JOHN PETERS

This majestic description occurs frequently in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut. 33, 11 ; I Samuel 9. 6-10), but only twice in the New Testament—I Tim. 6, 11 and 2 Tim 3, 17. The man of God is :

1. HOLY IN HIS WALK.

Firstly he is *humble*. As in all matters reflecting his daily walk his example is the Lord Jesus Christ, ‘who humbled

himself and became obedient unto death' (Philippians 2. 8). He, the Son of God, left the ivory palaces, to step into a world of shame and woe to win man back to Himself. The humility of love led to exaltation and victory via the Cross. Humility is viewed in the New Testament as part of the life of faith : to be humble is simply to live in a way consistent with the profession of our lips (Colossians 3, 12 ; James 4, 10; I Peter 5, 6 : 'to be clothed with humility') The man of God in his reverent humility desires the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ; the attitude of John the Baptist was 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3 v. 30). Secondly he is *obedient* to the Word of God. We must not only be like Mary, who learned at the feet of the Lord (Luke 10 v 39), we must also 'search the scriptures' (John 5, 39) and allow them to rule our conduct. Obedience to the Word of God has a prominent part in the New Testament (John 14. 23 ; Titus 1. 9; 2 Timothy 3. 14-17 ; compare Psalm 119. 105) —ultimately our obedience in this respect is the expression of our love for the Lord. Notice how the Lord used the sacred scriptures to counteract the subtlety of the Devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4) when tempted to self-satisfaction (v. 3), self-destruction (v. 7) and self-glorification (v. 9) He prefaced His reply on each occasion with the ringing affirmation, 'It is written.' And of course obedience to the Word of God leads to conformity to the Will of God. The principle of obedience led our Lord to the Cross of Calvary, Peter to martyrdom and death, and Paul to much suffering. Thirdly the man of God *loves*. This is the import of the teaching of John's 1st Epistle, a work written to encourage the beleaguered believers of Asia Minor. Loving the brethren, claims the Apostle John, is one of the proofs that we have eternal life. A contemporary historian recorded that the early christians loved each other with deep sincerity and intensity. Peter's injunction is as relevant today as it was when first he wrote it : 'love one another with a pure heart fervently' (I Peter 1, 22). Fourthly the man of God is *wholly yielded* unto God—Romans 6, 13.

2. EQUIPPED FOR THE WORK OF GOD.

There is an excellent illustration of this in 2 Kings 4. The Shunammite woman prepared for Elisha a room containing a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick. The bed would speak to us of rest in Christ (Matthew 11. 28-30). The man

of God has rest from a condemning conscience because he has been justified by faith; from dependence on his own ability and fitness for service. The table would speak to us of communion with Christ (Revelation 3. 20) Norman Grubb in his biography of C. T. Studd relates how the intrepid missionary would rise about 2.30 a.m. each day and, after a cup of tea, he would take down the Bible and be alone with God: 'what passed between them in those silent hours was known a few hours later to all who had ears to hear.' The candlestick would speak of witnessing to Christ, and the stool of learning from Christ (see Philippians 2. 14-16 and 2 Corinthians 10. 5).

3. POWERFUL IN HIS WITNESS.

Again what an inspiring example we see in the life of Elisha, 2 Kings 4. 18-37. The child was dead, as indeed we all are spiritually until we are quickened (made alive) by the Lord Jesus Christ. Gehaz was unable to do anything for the child, and not surprisingly, because he went to his task without prayer or preparation; nor was he persistent or believing in his attitude. Elisha began with prayer and trusted to God to give the dead child new life. He showed great exercise of heart and perseverance in his dealings with the child and the result was that the Shunamite woman's son 'opened his eyes.' It is ever the task and privilege of the man of God to lead the unconverted to a position where the eyes of their understanding are opened to perceive the truth of God; and then to instruct the converts in such a way that they progress, with enlightened understanding to a position of maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1. 28). May we all endeavour to more like the men and women of God as they are described in the Word of God.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ESTHER

(1) HOME RULE.

Chapter 1.22. "Every man should bear rule in his own house."

Esther—last of the 'historical' books; a book which, with the book of Ruth, bears the name of a woman—perhaps in itself suggestive of the great hope of Israel kept alive by faithful women. Women who kept alive the faith of Sarah.

A strange book, Esther, in that the Divine Name is not mentioned, unless indeed the view is accepted that the Name of Jehovah occurs four times, and the Name of Ehyeh once, in acrostic form; said to be indicative of the fact that whilst God had hidden His face from His people—as He said that He would—He was nevertheless still working for His people ‘behind the scenes’ in order that His promises and His purposes should not fall or fail before the onslaught of the adversary, Satan.

Incidentally the Median king is mentioned upon 192 occasions in the scope of 167 verses.

One verse is chosen from this well known story—the advice given to Ahasuerus by his princes, “Vashti hath not done wrong to the king only, but to all the princes . . . for this . . . all women shall despise their husbands . . . and then shall arise contempt and wrath.”

Accepting, as we do, that this book is part of the canon of Scripture, it is evident that God had, and still has His purpose in it, and therefore it has a lesson for His people—the book is still included in the “things written aforetime.”

The king’s counsellors were wise in their advice and the king wise in his acceptance of that advice, and in his issue of the subsequent edict, and although perhaps they did not know it, they were establishing in their own kingdom and its many provinces that which had been from the beginning when God Himself instituted a principle. (Genesis 3. 16.).

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, *as unto the Lord*. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands *in every thing*. Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the Church*, and gave Himself for it: that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such things; but that it should be holy and without blemish. *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies*. He that loveth his wife loveth himself . . . ” (Ephesians 5. 22-33).

This is not an argument for the subjection of women; rather, for the emancipation of the weaker sex in its fullest sense.

“Wives, submit yourselves in everything” yes, but remember how the Lord of the Church loved. So ought men to love their wives, that they, too, might present their wives to themselves in perfection—a part of themselves of which they may well be proud.

This is home-rule. A rule which in Esther’s day glorified the king as supreme and husbands as domestic lords, but which at the same time gave women their rightful place.

A rule which seems to have been very much forgotten in our own day and age, but which if kept—especially in Christian homes—can bring only happiness and contentment.

Cf. 1 Timothy 3. vv. 5, 15; Joshua 24. 15; and remember our Lord Jesus Christ the Son over His own house.

(2) “FOR A PURPOSE.”

Chapter 2. 5. “Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew; whose name was Mordecai.”

A possible criticism of Mordecai (and here the view of some commentators that the events of the book of Esther were subsequent to those of Ezra-Nehemiah, is accepted) is that he was prepared to stay in Shushan in preference to a return to his native land. If this view is rejected then, of course, the criticism does not arise.

In any case, however, it is certain that God had His man in the right place and at the right time. Mordecai was the man—“A certain Jew . . .”

A criticism levelled at the Old Testament writings by so many secular writers is that it displays a certain blood-thirstiness by men who acted as instructed by God, and something of this is seen in the book of Esther. Similar violence is seen in the actions of Samuel and of David. What must always be kept before us, however, is that Israel and all that Israel stood for was Satan’s constant target—especially the “seed royal.” Those who were moved by God to do His will were not always men of peace. To His chosen ones—whether men of war, or men of peace—there was a task to be fulfilled. Some were aware of the purpose; others were apparently ignorant of their purpose. Some failed in their task—or should it be that they failed in God’s purpose for them?

But we can surely leave the critics to flounder at the omniscience of God and assure ourselves that God had,

and has, His workers and His witnesses, even though He is not apparently seen, heard, or even mentioned!

In Damascus there was "a certain disciple named Ananias" (Acts 8. 10). Not a Peter or a John, but nevertheless a disciple called by name by His Lord to do a certain task. Perhaps just this one task. Who knows?

In Samaria there was an Oded, a prophet of the Lord (2 Chronicles 28. 9)—not an Isaiah or a Hosea, but a prophet called by God to do a certain task. Perhaps just this one task.

It is well to encourage our own selves with the knowledge that either we are where we are because that is where we want to be, or we are where we are because it is where God wants us to be.

To the church at Pergamos our Lord wrote (for it is not only individuals that God uses), "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is . . ." (Revelation 2. 13).

Wrote Paul, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Ceasar's household." (Philippians 4. 22).

—Contributed

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



NOW 32 PAGES!

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Tune . . . **JESUS THY DYING LOVE I OWN** 8.8.8.8.

Gathered around our blessed Lord
With heart and voice in one accord,
Afresh we view the mystery,
The Christ of God nailed to the tree.

O was there ever such a sight?
The noonday sun with-holds it's light,
Earth trembles at His parting cry,
But sinners sit and watch Him die.

And can it be with heart unmoved
We scan that love wherewith He loved?
Be this the burden of our sighs
That we are here with tearless eyes.

Sweet this memorial bread we eat
With heart all prostrate at His feet,
And with what joy we take the cup
From Him Who drank our sorrows up.

Lord write Thy love upon each heart
That we might know some feeble part
Of that eternal, sovereign grace
Which stooped to take a sinner's place.

O blessed Lord, our hearts would bow
In silent adoration now,
Henceforth declare with every breath
The saving worth of such a death.

—*J. M. Jones, Queensland.*

AN EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER

by JOHN PETERS (Surrey)

(Readings: 2 Chronicles 14; James 5.13-20)

The writer of 1 and 2 Chronicles pursues two themes in particular: true kingship and true worship. Prayer is, of course, a vital part of a believer's worship expressing, as it does, the 'soul's sincere desire', the 'motion of a hidden fire' that 'burns within the breast'. It has also been said that 'praying is working'. All these comments apply to Asa's prayer recorded in 2 Chronicles 14, which is sufficiently brief to be quoted in full:

"And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee."

In order to appreciate this prayer fully and properly, we can note its:

(1) CONTEXT.

Asa had succeeded his father, Abijah, as king of Judah, and he began his reign auspiciously by doing that which was "good and right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chron. 14.2). He took away "the altars of the strange gods" (v.3), and under him the land enjoyed peace and doubtless the prosperity that accompanied it (v.7). Eventually however his army of under 600,000 had to face the might of Zerah's army of a million troops, and before Asa went out to do battle against such over-whelming numbers, he prayed the prayer found in verse 11 of 2 Chronicles 14.

(2) CHARACTERISTICS.

Asa's prayer had four outstanding features. In the first place it was *Heart-felt*: 'He cried'. Asa was in earnest about the situation that confronted him. Like Nehemiah who had similarly faced appalling problems (Nehemiah 2.4), he prayed fervently and with sincerity. Secondly, it was *Personal*: 'To God'. Asa perceived that Israel's future was inextricably linked to God's divine will and so he sought His aid. He realised and confessed his great need in an attitude of utter dependance upon God and in a truly humble

way. Then, it was *Specific*: 'Help us'. Help was precisely what Asa needed at that hour of crisis. Assistance for him was soon available. For us too there is the promise of divine aid, for 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble' (Psalm 46.1). Fourthly, it was *Believing*: 'We rest on Thee'. This of course had ever been the secret of Israel's success, as another verse, also from 2 Chronicles makes explicit:

and the children of Israel prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers (chapter 13.18). This sort of God-given confidence has enabled the saints through the ages to face the sternest of tests and conflicts with equanimity and resolve, and part of this prayer is of course enshrined in the well-known hymn:

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender,
We go not forth alone against the foe.
(Strong in Thy Strength, safe in Thy keeping tender,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.

Yea, in Thy name, O Captain of Salvation,
(In Thy blest name, all other names above,
Jesus our Righteousness, our sure Foundation,
Our Prince of Glory, and our King of Love.

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,
And needing more each day Thy grace to know,
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender,
Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise
When passing through the gates of pearly splendour,
Victors, we rest with Thee through endless days.

How eloquently such divine confidence and courage was demonstrated by the five American missionaries—Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian and Pete Fleming—who sought to take the Gospel story to the Auca Indians of Ecuador. On Sunday, 8th January, 1956, having set up a base next to the Curaray river, Nate Saint radioed this message to the missionaries wives—'Have just sighted a commission of ten, it looks like they'll be here for the early afternoon service. Pray for us. This *is* the day. Will contact you next at four-thirty! After lunch the missionaries sang the hymn referred to above, then waited for the Aucas to

arrive. But, in Elisabeth Elliot's graphic words, 'Before four-thirty that afternoon the quiet waters of the Curaray flowed over the bodies of the five comrades, slain by the men they had come to win for Christ, whose banner they had borne'. These men, like Asa, knew what it was to rely for their strength absolutely on God, and like Asa too they knew a great deal of the power and solace of prayer.

(3) CONSEQUENCES.

Asa's prayer was answered in a striking and remarkable way: 'So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled'. Prayer does indeed 'change things'. Prayer is part of our "waiting on the Lord" and, as we know from Isaiah 40.31, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint".

Lord, teach us how to pray a-right,
With reverence and with fear,
Though dust and ashes in thy sight,
We may, we must, draw near.

RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

by EDWARD ROBINSON, Exmouth

Great emphasis (quite rightly) is placed in the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ. This glorious miracle is, of course, a fundamental truth of Christianity and an essential sequel to the death of Christ by which redemption was accomplished. Indeed it is, in one aspect, the seal of divine approval of that work when He was raised by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6.4). Another aspect of the resurrection is, of course, that death could not hold the One Who says of Himself 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' (John 11.25), and again of His life 'I have power to lay it down and to take it again' (John 10.18). This, needless to say, amongst many other things is unique to Christ.

Subjectively, however, according to Ephesians 3.20 it is the same power 'that worketh in us,' even now while in these mortal bodies and is, so to speak, the elevated platform on which the Christian life is to be lived. It is an inward power, operating unceasingly, the fruit of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which makes the life of the Christian to be on a dif-

ferent level to that of persons not so indwelt. A conscious sense of this power, ever present in the mind of the believer would prevent him moving on a lower, worldly level, inconsistent with this operation, not puffed up, but a humble recipient of the service of the Spirit of God.

Somewhat more neglected in ministry is the ascension of Christ. Yet it is from this position that all is administered : 'the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand' (John 3.35). As with many of the sayings in John's Gospel, this statement is not confined to time or place but is in character eternal. By contrast, many statements in the three synoptic gospels (especially Matthew's) have a dispensational bearing. Hebrews indeed states that if on earth Christ would not be a priest and further (9.24) that 'He has entered into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.' Here too, He is the Head of the church, His body, she deriving all, food and nourishment through the gifts from her ascended Head. Apart from these personal relationships of Christ with His church He also takes His place alongside the church in the service of praise and worship to God, as Leader. He declares (Heb. 2.11, 12), 'For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.' Perhaps in some measure this may be experienced in these days but in its fulness may more probably be known when the church in an eternal setting is called hence to be for ever with her beloved Eridegroom, never to go more out. Hebrews again (8.1, 2) views Him in this setting, 'Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man.' In this spirit the hymn writer says :

Father, to Thee, a joyful song we raise
With all Thine own,
And in Thy presence sound a note of praise
To Thee thus known :
Brought nigh, brought home to Thee; O wondrous grace,
That gives us now with Thine own Son our place.

He leads the praise : how precious to Thine ear
The song He sings;

How precious too to Thee, how near, how dear
Are those He brings
To share His place: 'twas thus that Thou didst plan
As loving Him before the world began.

Each of the four Gospels records the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but in only three is the ascension recounted. The omission in the Gospel by Matthew is interesting and perhaps not inappropriate as it is he who recounts the words of the Lord Jesus to His own 'And lo I am with you always.' Each of the other three has its own particular aspect; in John for instance (13.1, 3) the Lord's own view of His ascension was that He should depart out of this world unto the Father and as knowing that He came from God and was going to God. Again (John 20.17) 'I ascend to My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God.'

Mark records (16.19) 'He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.' How appropriate that God's blessed servant should be 'received up'—an expression which conveys the pleasure of God in the reception of the One Who had completed down to the smallest detail the will of God and could report 'It is finished.'

Luke tells us (24.51) 'He was parted from them and carried up into heaven,' expressive of the delight of heaven at the return in glorious Manhood of the One Who had left heaven to make known to men the heart of God and to share with them pleasures for evermore. Luke adds 'and they *worshiped Him*'. He has left to us an occasion on which we may worship Him and remember Him until His return to take us ever to be with Him (I Thess. 4.13-17). This occasion is for the heart of Christ and it is vital that it should not become ritual but a living and abiding link in mutual affection with a Man in the glory.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ESTHER

(continued)

(3) "MAKING A STAND"

Chapter 3. 4. "For he had told them that he was a Jew."

It may be that Mordecai knew that the fate or future of Jewry rested with Him—a tremendous responsibility!

If he bowed the knee to Haman the enemy of God's (and his) people (for it appeared that Haman's hatred of

the Jew did not stem alone from Mordecai's refusal to reverence him, although it possibly fanned the hatred into action) then he failed even as others had failed, and if others followed his example then what good were the ancient promises? If he refused (as he did) then he and his people—the people of God—would be destroyed. Unless God stepped in.

So much depended upon the actions of this one man. A lesson to be taken to heart whether as a Christian, or as a Church, or even as an individual member of a Church.

Later, Mordecai was to say to Esther, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

The story of Mordecai and his fellow-countrymen—Jews who, though citizens of a foreign country maintained their own customs and religion (v. 3)—was to be repeated again and again from then until now—and not always with such a happy ending. A Jew, and proud of it—such was Mordecai's attitude.

This pride of race has kept them as a nation apart, and how they would have been used of God if they had been but willing! How they will yet be used in this world's future! We wonder just how much Gentile history owes to the Jewish people, and to what extent history has been affected by Jewish counsel, Jewish finance and Jewish culture. And how much does history owe to the Christian faith? How much does history—whether local or otherwise whether in the community or in the Church—owe to individual believers?

Mordecai realised that if he failed, then God was able to raise another (4. 14) but this task was his to perform.

At this moment Mordecai was God's man and thus he must not fail.

Moses when hemmed in, before and behind, said, "Stand still" (Exodus 14. 1).

A call for courage in Moses as the example to God's people.

After his conversion Paul was to record, "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus . . . a citizen of no mean city" (Acts 11. 39), but later wrote, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (Philippians 3. 20).

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” (Hebrews 13. 13-14).

“And having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6. 13). This is the combination of faith and works.

(4) “WHO KNOWS?”

Chapter 4. 14. “. . . who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther, whose name means ‘star’ is truly one of the stars of the Scripture—taking her place with other heroines who kept alive the hope of Israel. Taking her place in the harem of a Gentile king she must have known that the promise of the Messiah would not be fulfilled in her, but at least she was prepared to die for Israel. We should note that the purposes of God are not confined to the deeds of men, for so often when men failed, women prevailed.

Esther, like Mordecai, had a part to play.

Not a gentle Ruth, or Bath-sheba. Not a patient Mary or a busy Dorcas, but one born of her time. Esther takes her place among the women of the Bible—among those whose destinies were inextricably linked with the future of the holy seed. All vessels for the glory of God in the preservation of His people.

We have said that Mordecai must have had some idea of his own part in this, and it would appear that he was willing to sacrifice Esther to a Gentile monarch so that when the time came both he and she would be in a position to act.

This may, of course, be a mere conjecture, but again it must be remembered that Mordecai and Esther were the children of their day and age. God, unseen, was behind all, and where Mordecai questioned “Who knows?” God knew and was well aware of all things concerning the present and future of Israel.

This is not ‘fate’, but a definite overruling of God Whose purposes must and will be fulfilled. The secret is in ‘knowing’ without ‘hastening’ His purpose.

Abraham, it will be remembered, sought to hasten the purposes of God—and what trouble it caused him! Abraham was not alone—and indeed is not even among believers—alone in this. To run ahead of God’s time and purpose is not wise. God will not be frustrated by our frustrations.

We are a 'called' people. Called according to His purpose (Romans 8. 28).

Timothy received this word from Paul, "The Lord knoweth them that are His . . . and in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." (2 Tim. 2. 19-20).

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are . . ." (1 Corinthians 1. 26-31).

THE MODEL BELIEVER IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

by **RICHARD JEFFERY, Reading**

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Tim. 3: 14,15.

That two letters were written by Paul to his "true child in the faith," Timothy, emphasises the importance of being a member of the house of God, and what is expected of one claiming such membership.

"Be thou an example (model, J.N.D.) of the believers" 1 Tim. 4: 12, is the exhortation, and then follows the details of that which, in practice, is characteristic of a model believer in the house of God. It was not only for the guidance of Timothy that Paul gave these instructions but for "faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also." 2 Tim. 2: 2 (J.N.D.).

As the church of God is the predominant subject in the New Testament it would be strange indeed if God had given no word as to the behaviour of the members of it, and if there were no word of guidance given us and those within the house behaved themselves as they pleased the result

would be disorder, both to the discomfort of other members and dishonour to the Owner and Builder of the house.

The "house of God" is not a synonym for a religious building, but refers to the "habitation of God through the Spirit" Eph. 2 : 22. It is to take character from God Himself, and He is "not the author of confusion (disorder), but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." 1 Cor. 14 : 33. For peace we must have order; for order we must have rule; for rule we must have authority; and for authority we must have supremacy. Therefore, it is where Christ's Lordship is acknowledged in a practical manner that tranquility, harmony, and spiritual effectiveness is known. Elders have the responsibility of instructing the local assembly as to conduct suited to the house of God. It may seem tedious at times, and one may feel repetitive in putting these things before the younger ones as generation succeeds generation. Of old time, the fathers in Israel were to be well instructed in the ways of God, so that when their children questioned them, for example, about the passover, Ex. 12 : 26, or "when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, "What mean the testimonies, and the statutes and the judgements, which the Lord our God hath commanded you," Deut. 6: 20; and "what mean ye by these stones?" Josh. 4 : 6,21, the fathers were not to be evasive, but "ye shall let your children know." Josh. 4 : 22.

It is sometimes difficult to get younger Christians to accept the scriptural description of the church of God, with their minds often clouded by the ecclesiastical image common to the average person. The servants of Christ must state and restate the truths in connection with the church even if they feel the saints know these things already.

The passing on of "these things" was not only for Timothy in his day but for such as would maintain a continuity of testimony down the centuries, and in the goodness of God there are still with us those who "continue in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." 2 Tim. 3 : 14.

It is not coincidence that these things were primarily addressed to a young man who was not to let anyone make light of him on account of his youthfulness, although he was told to show respect to elders as is fitting behaviour in a well-ordered house. 1 Tim. 5 : 1.

Much as the young are to be loved and helped they must not be allowed to run the house as they wish, but submit, as Peter says, to the elders, giving an ear to their counsel but not giving elders advice. "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another." 1 Peter 5 : 5. In such an atmosphere of subjection one to another quarrelling would be almost unknown. The modern worldly nonsense of 'self-expression' should not animate Christians. Let us rather seek to set forth within the house of God as without, the blessed Saviour, characterised by His meek and lowly walk, and glad obedience to His Father's will.

Sisters have their special place in the house of God, although it is not the public place. When Paul writes of prayer in the house of God, for example, it is the men who are to engage in this audibly, 1 Tim. 2 : 8. The sisters, in response to the Divine ordering, will be content to remain "in quietness." There are some wholesome lessons for us in this, especially in the atmosphere of the world around us where 'equality' is the watchword. We do not set aside the order of God without disastrous results, results which we are able to see all around us.

The ministry of sisters is exercised with quiet dignity characteristic of true godliness. The spirit of "the restless world that wars below" can so easily find its way into the assembly, and some may, thereby clamour for a place God has not assigned them with consequent discontent and agitation disturbing the happy fellowship of the saints.

There is no suggestion anywhere in the New Testament that what the Spirit-inspired writers have given us would ever need to be up-dated, sub-edited or blue-pencilled! That men would tamper with the Word of God we have been warned, and in its place they would turn to fables, 2 Tim. 4 : 3-4, but we are to keep that which has been delivered unto us, and let it be our guide in all matters affecting our conduct in the house of God in its local assembly setting.

The present avalanche of versions of the Holy Bible has been instrumental in causing a good deal of confusion, with one result being that many younger believers are unable to quote a text correctly, let alone memorise a favourite portion. This is to be deplored.

Let us give good heed to the apostle's parting words to the elders of Ephesus : "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts 20 : 32. It is the application of the word of God to our lives that sanctifies. John 17 : 17, and sanctification is practical holiness which, says the Psalmist, "becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." Psalm 93 : 5.

SIN IN THE LIFE

by **CLIFF JONES**

SIN

God is holy (Ps. 145.17; Hab. 1.13; Rev. 15.4). Sin is disobedience to the revealed will of God; it is a missing of the mark, loving self more than loving God (Matt. 22.37-39; II Tim. 3.2). Sin came into the world through Adam (Rom. 5.12). The results of sin are physical and spiritual death (Gen. 2.17; 3.19; Ezek. 18.4, 20; Rom. 6.23). All have sinned (I Kings 8.46; Ecc. 7.20; Isa. 64.6; Rom. 3.23; I John 1.8) with the exception of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (I Peter 2.22).

The punishment of sin is inevitable (Gal. 6.7; Num. 32.23). We are all hell-deserving sinners and our salvation from the penalty, power and ultimately, from the presence of sin is by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6.23; Eph. 2.8, 9; John 14.6; Acts 4.12).

SIN AND THE BELIEVER

Sin in the life of the believer has many and varied results. Where sin is recognised, judged and confessed by the believer, God is ". . . faithful and Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1.9), but we suffer the consequences of sin in this present life.

We have the written Word of God to guide us and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to overcome the power of sin. We are called upon to live holy lives with sin being the exception rather than the rule of our behaviour. But when we, weak and frail as we are, fall into sin, we know that ". . . we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2.1).

Sin separates. It comes between us and our Father and hinders our prayers, (Ps. 66.18; Isa. 59.1-3; James 4.3; I John 3.21, 22).

Sin restricts the work of the Holy Spirit and hinders worship and fruitful service in the life of the believer. Sin and worldliness in the life of an individual believer or in the assemblies of the Lord's people grieves the Holy Spirit and reduces our sensitivity to further sins and the effectiveness of our witness to lost people around us (I Thess 5.19; Eph. 4.30).

Unconfessed, unjudged sin in the life of a believer brings not only ineffectiveness in witnessing but unhappiness in the life (Ps. 51.8-13).

EFFECT ON OTHERS

Our sins affect others. Other believers can be affected and influenced, as can members of our families and unbelievers with whom we come into contact. The sins of men of God are not concealed in the Bible. Take, for example, David (a man after God's own heart, Acts 13.22) and consider his adultery with Bathsheba (II Sam. 11). David coveted Bathsheba, stole her from her husband, committed adultery and committed murder by arranging for Uriah to be placed in the thick of the battle. David later repented of his sin and received forgiveness but there were consequences of his sin (II Sam. 12.10-14). The prophet Nathan said to David ". . . the sword shall never depart from thine house" (II Sam. 12.10), and in the following chapters we read that the baby born to Bathsheba died, Absalom arranged the murder of Amnon, Absalom seized the kingdom and tried to kill David, Absalom was killed while hanging by his hair in a tree, and later Adonijah was slain.

Sins in the life of a believer have many and unforeseen effects. As a result of David's sin, dishonour was brought on God's name and God's enemies blasphemed (II Sam. 12.14). A believer's sin can cause God's name to be blasphemed and can give unbelievers an excuse to pour ridicule and contempt on the things of Christ.

Believers who sin will be chastened by God "that we might be partakers of his holiness," (Heb. 12.4-10; Ps. 119 67). In Deuteronomy 28 we read of the curses which would

fall on Israel if they turned away from God. Some believers die because of their sins (I Cor. 11.30-32). Sometimes sickness can be the result of sin in the believer's life (James 5.14-16). Sometimes material losses result (Mal. 3.9-11; Hag. 1.6).

Sin is "exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7.13); it is an affront to a holy God. We need to wait on God continually (Ps. 27.14; Isa. 40.31) for the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the sin in our lives, that we might judge it and confess it so that our Father might forgive us our sins. We need to wait on God constantly for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to deliver us from sin (I Cor. 10.12) that we might be clean vessels, fit for the Master's use.

EASTERN EUROPE

by ROGER BRIND, Cardiff

The Lord's work in the countries of the Eastern Bloc has been the subject of many glossy evangelical magazines over the past ten years. Many believers in assembly fellowship have rightly been concerned about a number of items and have raised a number of questions.

- (a) Do the organisations which work in Eastern Europe benefit the assemblies?
- (b) Do assemblies as we know them exist?
- (c) What are the needs of the assemblies?
- (d) What are the needs of individuals?

The Editor has asked me to write this article and in it I intend to present the situation as I see it, from personal experience and from discussions held with brethren in these lands.

Over the past eleven years I have often visited various "Iron Curtain" countries. I have lived for periods of up to a month with believers in one country, before moving on to another to do the same. By doing this I have shared in their trials, triumphs, joys and sorrows.

Each Eastern Bloc country is different. The only linking factor being the communist government of each.

The assemblies in EAST GERMANY are very strong in the South of the country. Particularly in the Central Southern Region they are not only numerous but large. Assemblies with 500 in fellowship are not unknown and

many have 250 in fellowship. There are about 15 full time workers in the country, all East Germans who are commended by their assemblies. They are employed in bible teaching, visitation, evangelism, etc. There are very few who are evangelists and those that there are, are extremely overworked. As I write, I have the diary of one evangelist before me—he plans (D.V.) 28 campaigns in 1980. I have worked with him in the past, and expect (D.V.) to do so in the future and I have never visited a place where a campaign has been held where no blessing has followed.

In CZECHOSLOVAKIA there are about 150 assemblies. Most are small, the larger assemblies are in the Slovak region but they have only about 100 members. The vast majority of assemblies are 15—40 strong. They do not enjoy the freedoms of their East German brethren in that visiting brethren are not encouraged to minister God's word for political reasons. Also they do not have the access to books that the East Germans do, although they do have an adequate supply of bibles. Bibles for East Germany are printed in the country—at Zwickau. The Czechs have one full time worker. There is a very real need for ministry in the country—some very gifted men have left and some who remain are under pressure. One of the most gifted men I have had the joy of knowing is currently under great pressure. For obvious reasons I cannot identify him further.

In HUNGARY the assemblies are currently enjoying unprecedented freedom and growth. In 1973 there were 23 assemblies, to-day there are more than 40. Most of the assemblies are growing and there are other groups of believers who have seen the need to follow the simple pathway of Scripture who are moving in the direction of the assemblies. There are no full time servants as we know them. But many retired men are giving themselves to a full time ministry of the truth. The wise leadership that some of these brethren, and others such as Professor Kiss now in the glory have given has won great freedom for Hungarian Saints. Bibles are readily obtainable in the assemblies.

In YUGOSLAVIA, the assemblies have an uneven pattern of distribution. They are small in number and mainly concentrated in the Slovak speaking area of the country. The testimony of these assemblies and the men who lead amongst the flock of God is outstanding. The assemblies enjoy a

good measure of freedom—they meet without let or hindrance, they can print internally and western visitors can take part without problems in the assemblies.

In ROMANIA, there are three main types of assembly—the official group, the unofficial and the exclusive groups. Also there are three language divisions. Romanian assemblies, Hungarian assemblies and German assemblies. There are more than 500 assemblies belonging to these three groups. Both the floods of 1970 and the earthquake of 1977 caused grave problems and disrupted the supply of scriptures. There is a need in some areas for bibles. Many of the assemblies are large and there is a great need for the ministry of the scriptures.

In BULGARIA there are no assemblies as we know them. The faithful believers in this land have lost “one of those men of whom the world was not worthy” during the past decade—Stephen Stephanov. He, his wife and daughter who were valiant for the truth have been called home. The daughter was relatively young and left a heartbroken family.

In ALBANIA there are no assemblies and little is known of any evangelical witness.

In POLAND, the assembly is extremely mixed. There are undoubtedly groups of faithful believers who gather to the name of the Lord Jesus. These groups are few and far between. Most of the assemblies have formed an alliance with other groups, an alliance which has led to many unscriptural patterns being adopted. Amongst this situation there are men who are seeking the true pathway, they need the prayers and support of the Lord’s people.

In the U.S.S.R., the situation is varied. The U.S.S.R. is made up of 15 republics—less than half are true Russians. The assemblies are much more populous in the non-Russian republics than in Russia itself. A recent report from Tallin, the capital of Lithuania spoke of large assemblies thirsting for the word of God. The same is true of the other Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia. The Central Asian Republics—bordering China and Afghanistan were areas reached by Dr. Boedaker and Lord Radstoke in the last century. To-day there are many large assemblies in the area—they do not meet in secret, but do have their activities circumscribed. In other areas the assemblies do meet in

secret. Andrei Sakaran the eminent scientist, wrote long ago "the opening of new churches is forbidden as it is an admission of the failure of atheistic principles." New assemblies cannot get permission to exist and so meet in homes. Sometimes the homes are raided and the owners arrested. "We never have a problem from this." a Ukranian brother told me, "always somebody else gives their home for the meeting." "But," he added "we are not an underground church—remember a lamp set on a hill cannot be hid—we must be that lamp."

So in answer to the question do assemblies exist—the answer is yes.

What about "the organisations"? This is a question I have put to trusted brethren in Eastern Europe. One brother who I know to be involved in bible transport replied "the only help I get is from you brother and the West German assemblies. Many organisations have a big mouth but a small hand." Another complained bitterly that the picture of suffering painted by one magazine was false. He agreed that in some places there is suffering, but that in his country where there was a report of great suffering it was totally false. Yes there was a measure of suffering but it was not for belief but for disobedience to the government and love of Western money. On another occasion, I was called to a brothers house to look at a consignment of books he had received. It was all charismatic literature!! From an organisation that claims to deal only in bibles!! As the brother was a blacksmith, we had little difficulty disposing of the literature in his forge. I have no evidence at all, that anything except a tiny fraction of monies given to "the organisations" gets into the hands of assembly folk. I would strongly advise saints to send monies out through assembly workers.

The needs of assemblies, and of individuals in them are great. The standard of living is much lower than ours. In the summer this is not so apparent as in the depths of winter. Anyone who has visited these lands, in the depths of winter will notice the deprevations of fellow believers. The cold is intense—new woollens of all types are very necessary. All new articles of clothing can be used.

A literature and cassette ministry is operational. All of "the Precious Seed" Eooklets are translated into Hungarian

and as funds become available they are being printed. We are always seeking to extend this ministry by setting up new equipment and supplying materials necessary. In countries where there are full time workers they have great needs. They need prayers as do their wives and children who undergo much due to their husbands and fathers exercise. One sister said to me "if only you knew, the loneliness and the strain of being the wife of a servant of God." Prayer is needed for all situations, but particularly for those who are seeking to live a life for God in circumstances of compromise. We do not have their pressures. We cannot (and that includes those of us who live with these dear folks for periods during the year) appreciate what it means to live in a closed society.

Pray Brethren, pray!

POSITION AND CONDITION

by **J. G. GOOD**

How often we have heard the prayer, 'let me be weighed in an even balance' (Job 31.6), the dangers of legalism and levity have ever posed a threat to the Christian, and this is present with us today. There was only ever One Man Who walked with perfect balance, 'fine flour mingled with oil' (Lev. 2.4), every trait of His character evenly blended together. He wept over the city, (Luke 19.41), He drove the moneychangers out of the temple, (Matt. 21.12), of Him it could be said, 'Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ' (John 1.17).

As we read the history of the life of David, we see two men preeminent, yet with no link except that they were both connected with David, i.e., Jonathan and Joab, the solemn truth is this, that despite their seeming nearness to David neither gained a place on the list of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23). As we ponder this we ask, 'is there not a cause'?

The record of Jonathan's love for David, which was reciprocal, has thrilled the hearts of those who read it. The conquest of David in the valley, won the heart of Jonathan, who himself was a victorious soldier (1 Sam. 13.2), as a result of this Jonathan strips himself of all placing his robe, garments, sword, bow, and girdle, at the feet of David. Jonathan was a selfless man and recognised in David the

future King of Israel, his love for David was constantly manifest. Was Jonathan's love only a natural love? It was true he equally loved Saul his father! We must see beyond a servant to his Lord, a much needed lesson for our day! Jonathan had the character and qualities which could have been used by the king, but alas, when the time of crisis came, we read, 'Jonathan went into the city' (1 Sam. 20.42). Jonathan was subject to a man who acted contrary to the will of God, Saul his father, who despite his failure to act for God made laws of his own to which he demanded a ready obedience, (1 Sam. 14.43). The love of Jonathan for David was wonderful, and yet it was not strong enough to break the strong ties of nature and take him to the cave of Adullam with David! The life of Jonathan ends on Mount Gilboa with Saul, (2 Sam. 1.23) his personal grace failing to separate him from the evil of his father, he remained fettered to him even in death. It is indeed a solemn thing to be subject to a man or system, acting contrary to the revealed will of God, and with no place for the Man destined to reign!

There is a truth throughout the Word of God, that God takes up the man with the wilderness experience, who has proved his faithfulness in times of adversity! Have we identified ourselves with the King in His rejection! Heart attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ should take us to the place where He is honoured and revered!

We observe that Joab had the wilderness experience, yet his name is omitted from David's roll of honour, and this for a reason too obvious. Joab represents a man void of affection for David, and yet at the same time he is actively engaged in the establishment of David the king, having due regard to his own position. There is the grave possibility that we too in a legal sense could be in the place of rejection but without heart attachment to our Lord! If Joab had been bound to David by the cords of love, would he have acted as he did? Without doubt Joab was a man of blood, who acted independently of David, and by his actions bringing agony of soul and sorrow of heart to the king. Joab murdered Abner in cold blood (II Sam. 3.27), he was guilty of the death of Absalom (II Sam. 18.14), and he was the instrument of David's sin in causing the death of Uriah the Hittite (II Sam. 11.17).

David was unable to deal with Joab because of his part in the death of Uriah, he could not condemn that which he had condoned, he could not punish that which he had permitted. David had said earlier 'these men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me,' (II Sam. 3.39), the price of compromise can prove to be costly! The conduct of Joab was indeed a most bitter memory to David, and when Solomon was declared king, David reminded him, of what Joab had done, and requested that his hoar head should not go down to the grave in peace (I Kings 2.5, 6). Joab proved to be a merciless man, who despite clinging to the horns of the altar himself was shown no mercy (I Kings 2.28).

We do well to remind ourselves that there is the possibility of falling short of the commendation of our David, is there a link between our 'position' and 'condition,' are we identified with our rejected Lord on account of love or is it legality? May our response be 'Thine are we David, and on Thy side, Thou son of Jesse' (I Chron. 12.18).

'Unto Thee, the homeless stranger
Outside the camp,
Forth we hasten, fear no danger,
Outside the camp.
Thy reproach far richer treasure
Than all Egypt's boasted pleasure;
Drawn by love that knows no measure,
Outside the camp.'

PREACH HIS LOVE

(Selected)

The Gospel is the disclosure of God's love, and of God's work on behalf of a ruined world. The fine old Saxon word, Gospel, meaning *glad tidings*, is used in various connections in the Scriptures (see Heb. 4. 2 ; Mark 1. 14 ; Gal. 3. 8 ; I Cor. 15. 1 ; I Tim. 1. 11 ; Rev. 14. 6). In the Irish language "Gospel" signifies "The Story of Peace." It would prove an interesting and profitable study to examine the use of the word Gospel throughout the Scriptures ; but in our present remarks we refer to the evangelical sense of the word, which is one, thank God, which every saved person knows the truth of in his own soul.

God's love to the world was not made known to patriarchs of old. Israel was made acquainted with Jehovah's tenderness and care, but not with His heart's deep love, measured by the gift of His Son. The prophets grandly told of the future, of the Messiah's power and glory, but "God so loved the world" never trembled on their lips. The eye of the seer might rest on coming glories, and his heart be entranced, as piercing through the gloom of ages scenes of surpassing delight met his enraptured gaze. But glory is not love, and God's love was hidden from his sight. Christ alone could bear witness to what was ever in the heart of God. In the Divine bosom was heaped up a love which none could disclose, save He Who ever is in the bosom of the Father (John 1. 18). He alone knew it, and so none but He could unfold it. God's love was a deep and hidden secret, too grand for human mind to fathom or human lips to express. God's Son, come down from Heaven, alone knew and alone could interpret the great heart of God. The theme "God so loved the world" (John 3. 16) is one so vast, so bold, so mighty, full, and overwhelming in its conception, that to the Son only could the glory be reserved of publishing it in word—Himself the expression of it in His life and on the Cross.

God's love conquers, and has conquered. John 3. 16 numbers its trophies and victories by millions, "numberless as the sands on the sea shore;" nor will the tide of conquest be checked till the weary world is wrapped round in the folds and plies of God's mighty love, and each inhabitant of the redeemed and eternal earth echo from the depths of his ransomed soul the glad refrain, "God is love."

Oh, that the mantle of the Master might fall on all evangelists! That they might preach God's love as did the Lord, a love which embraced the sinner while it rebuked sin, a full, free, yet holy and righteous love! It is not true love which compounds with the guilty, which abates an iota of the throne's most righteous claim. God's love has become our soul's refuge; for, while it exposes sin, it has won the poor heart and made it a right willing captive for ever. Preach this love. Yes, preach it fully and preach it boldly, and without the slightest reservation in the soul.

God has not only loved the world, but has wrought for

it. The Gospel is termed the Gospel of God (Rom. 1. 1) because He is its blessed source ; it is also spoken of as the Gospel of His Son (Rom. 1. 9), as the Peerless One of God is the all-glorious object which it unfolds. God is its *source*, Christ is its *object*, and every creature on earth its *subject* (Mark 16. 15).
—Selected.

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(8) THE ESSENTIAL DEITY OF CHRIST

The two titles "Son of God" and "The Word" ensure that we understand that the Lord Jesus was a manifestation of the Godhead in Person, and not merely an impersonal influence, and that He is on an equality with the Father of Whose Person and glory He is an accurate expression. In Col. 2.9, we have a concise and profound statement : "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Christ possessed the very nature, essence and being of God. He is "Our Great God and Saviour" (Tit. 2.13 R.V.; Isa. 7.14; 9.6 R.V.; Micah 5.2; Rom. 9.5).

DEITY DECLARED

In His Birth and His Name (Isa. 7.14, with Matt. 1.21). His Titles (Isa. 9.6 with Acts 10.36; Prov. 8.22.30 with John 1.1-2; 16.27, 28).

Note the tremendous facts in John 1.1-4. *His Eternal Existence* "In the beginning was the Word." This is eternity, transcending time. Not "came" but "was" already in existence before creation.

His Distinct Personality "Was WITH God." Face to face with God, or at home with God. He partook of the Divine nature, distinct from the Father and equal to the Father.

His Essential Deity "was God." Not became but was God (Col. 1.15). As the Word He was the expression of God. "Who is" (Col. 1.15); "Who being" (Phil. 2.6); declare the Personality of the Son as distinct from the Father; the Pre-existence of the Son from all eternity; the full and proper Deity of the Son. "Is" the eternal present (Heb. 13.8).

His Eternal Personality "The same was in the beginning

with God" (v.2). He is not merely a manifestation of the Deity in time. Christ is God, without beginning, supreme and transcendent. These verses 1 and 2 stress the Absolute Eternity of Christ, possessing all the attributes and essence of God. In Christ God becomes visible, and all things else become intelligible.

Verse one informs us of His precedence, position and personality. Verse two of His parity with God, not a manifestation of God. Verse three denotes the pre-existence of the Word before Creation. *His Creational Ability* (v.3). He is the originator of all things (Col. 1.16). Nothing came into being apart from His presence and power (Prov. 8.22-30). He is the uncreated and eternal Son of God. He is in a class by Himself. He is prior to, distinct from, and highly exalted above every creature (Psa. 89.27; Col. 1.16, 17).

His Essential Vitality (v.4) The profound mystery of life which in its very nature must remain unsolved to the creature. He is the source of all natural life, intellectual life and spiritual perception. It is His life which is imparted to all living creatures.

John speaks of His Dignity and priority (1.15, 27). The superlative is used, "before me and first of all." He is the Reservoir of Divine fulness and the Revealer of the Godhead (v.18).

DEITY DISPLAYED

The activities of God are ascribed to the Son and displayed by Him. His omnipotence as Creator (John 1.3; 2.19, 21; 10.18). His Omniscience—all knowledge (John 2.24, 25; 4.18, 25, 26, 29; 16.33; 21.17). His omnipresence (John 3.13; 14.23).

The signs of John's gospel demonstrate His Deity (20.30, 31). The mighty works of the Father in creation and redemption, He claimed to be able to do (5.19). The validity of His claims cannot be denied, the "I AM" is the Divine Name of Jehovah. "I am the light of the World" (8.12); "The Door" (10.9); "the Good Shepherd" (10.11); "the Resurrection and the Life (11.25); "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (14.6); "I am the true Vine" (15.1). To His enemies He states His Deity emphatically (8.24, 58). John 5 adds to these claims. Equality with the Father in activity (v.19); in knowledge (v.20); in raising the dead (v.21, 28, 29); in judging (v.22); in honour (v.23); in regenerating souls (v.24) and as the Self-Existing One (v.26).

DEITY DEFENDED

His openly claimed to be the Messiah (John 4.25, 26); His words are life (6.63); He knew His betrayer (6.64, 70). John gives seven distinct testimonies to Him — Himself (5.31; 8.14); the Baptist (5.33); His miracles (5.36); the Father (5.37); Scripture (5.39-47); the Holy Spirit (15.26); and Believers (15.27). Others can be added, the authority of His teaching (3.11; 7.28-34, 45, 46; 9.4-7).

John identifies His glory with Jehovah of Hosts (John 12.41; Isa. 6.1-3). His holiness and resurrection prove His Deity (8.46; 2.19, 22; 10.17, 18).

DEITY DELIGHTED IN

By the Apostles (John 1.14; 20.28); the Baptist (1.27-35); Nathaniel (1.49); honoured by the people (12.13); Martha (11.27); and Thomas who cheered the heart of His Master by his adoration (20.28).

We have mainly looked at John's record of Christ. Study the Witness of Paul, Peter and John in their epistles and the clear revelation of His Deity in Hebrews and Revelation.

Our response is, "He is Thy Lord, and worship thou Him" (Psa. 45.11).

"And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Grecians." Acts 17: 29.

"Let the Spirit be lacking, and there may be wisdom of words, but not the wisdom of God; the powers of oratory, but not the power of God; the demonstration of argument and the logic of the schools, but not the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, the all-convincing logic of His lightning flash, such as convinced Saul before the Damascus gate. When the Spirit was outpoured the disciples were all filled with power from on high; the most unlettered tongue could silence gainsayers, and with its new fire burn its way through obstacles as flames fanned by mighty winds sweep through forests."—ARTHUR T. PIERSON.

HEADSHIP

by **J. CAMPBELL, Larkhall**

(Read I Chronicles 29.11; I Corinthians 11.3; Ephesians 1.22; 5.23)

The doctrine of Headship is clearly taught, both in the Old and New Testaments. It does not suggest superiority on the one hand, or inferiority on the other; namely sub-

jection. It is a matter of Divine appointment for the maintenance of harmony in life, whether natural or spiritual. Certain relationships have been established by God for our good and happiness; for example, that of Husband and Wife, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants. If any, or all of these are violated or abandoned, there is an immediate breakdown in society. Here lies the basic cause of so much unrest in our generation. The marriage bond lightly set aside in ready divorce, parental authority flouted in the home, and industrial relationships disrupted when the status of management and staff is in question. Headship is additional to and complementary with these three orders, and applies equally with the Angelic as with their human counterparts. In I Chronicles 29, 11, David, in his inaugural address to Israel at the commencement of the building of the Temple, addresses God as the exalted Head above all. In the ascending ranks of intelligences from angels, archangel, seraphim, cherubim, to principalities, powers, mights, dominions; the Lord sits exalted above all in Heaven. Headship is acknowledged and exercised; even between intelligences of a higher order than our own. Michael, the Archangel, the highest of the unfallen spiritual Princes, did not dare to rebuke the mighty fallen Prince, the devil, when in dispute about the body of Moses. Headship forbade him. He stands aside, and rightly asserts, "the Lord rebuke thee." Michael may have been equal or inferior in rank with Satan, and must have had authority from the Lord Himself to acquire Moses' body, even when Satan had territorial rights to it as the God of this world, yet he rebukes him not! In the Heavens, headship cannot be violated, nor the etiquette of protocol even in a single instance, be set aside. This lends emphasis to the petition in what is commonly called "THE LORD'S PRAYER," "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" Matthew 6.10. That the holy region of heaven should become the first casualty through Satan (then Lucifer) by sin's entrance, is startling. God now has forever secured the sanctity of His dwelling place, by the angelic orders passing from a state where they could sin, and some did; and were expelled: to one where they now cannot, and are called, the "Elect Angels." Headship is associated with the entrance of sin, not only in the heavenly sphere; but also the earthly.

When the great God of Creation gathered the dust of the

ground and from it formed man; when the same God breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils; when man stood in all his solitary, pristine dignity, in innocency, without a companion; as yet there was no need for Headship. He found no corresponding helpmeet and helpmate in the animal kingdom. Nor even when His Creator builded a woman to stand with him in innocency, is Headship mentioned; they were equally responsible before their God. But, immediately sin gained an entrance, through Satanic, serpent means; God pronounces on Eve, because of her disobedience, a new order of relationship between her and Adam, and that Headship. "He shall rule over thee."

While God places humanity generally in stated relationships for their mutual benefit and well being, such as children and parents, husband and wife, also masters and servants; He has as clearly specified areas of Headship and Subjection; because sin has disrupted that Edenic order; and hostility instead of harmony with God now marks humanity. Thus, sin's entrance explains the NEED for Headship.

We now examine the NATURE of Headship. It does not invest the one in whom headship is deposited with arrogance or a sense of superiority: to Lord it over his partner; nor does it humiliate the subjected one to a state of inferiority and abject slavery. In no way does it suggest a condition of autocracy. Spirituality is evidenced in a humble acceptance and submission to the particular sphere allocated.

Its NEWNESS has already been explained. It was intended to bring harmony out of the discord sin had introduced, between partners in a Divine relationship. Thus we are brought to consider the NOBILITY of Headship. In the sanctified sphere of matrimony, the wife is referred to as the "weaker vessel." This cannot in all instances be interpreted in the physical sense. Many a wife is more robust than the husband. It implies a weakness in the female which is to be recognised by the male. She is to be held in honour, and worthy of respect and esteem, hence nobility.

The NOMINEES for headship fall into three groups:—

They are, Christ	and	men
Man	and	woman
God	and	Christ (Explanation will follow).

These form four partnerships or NOTABILITIES for Headship, namely:—

Christ	and	the	Church
Christ	and	the	Man
Man	and	the	Woman
God	and	the	Christ.

Finally, there are the NUMBER of Headships. They are seven, which brings us to our subject.

The Headship

of God.	Over	Creation.	Absolute.	1 Chron. 29-12
„	and	Christ.	Positionally.	1 Cor. 11.3
Christ.	and	Men.	Absolute.	1 Cor. 11.3
„	and	Church.	Absolute.	Eph. 5.23
Man.	and	Creation.	Delegated.	Psa. 8.6
„	and	Woman.	Absolute.	1 Cor. 11.3
Husband.	and	Wife.	Selective.	Eph. 5.23

HEADSHIP—GOD AND CREATION (ABSOLUTE)

(1 Chronicles 29)

God is Head over all in Heaven because of:—

The Possessions He Has. These are detailed in verse 11.

1. GREATNESS. Which is unsearchable, Psa. 145.3.
2. POWER. Omnipotent. All powerful.
= Pantokrator = Rev. 19.6.
3. GLORY.
 - A. Celestial. Hab. 3.3.
 - B. Terrestrial. Num. 14.21.
 - C. Personal. Zech. 6.13.
 - D. Indivisible. Isa. 48.11.
4. VICTORY. Divine Title = Strength of Israel.
1 Sam. 15.29.
5. MAJESTY. Dignity and Honour. Psa. 21.9.
6. KINGDOM. Area of Rule.
7. HEAVEN
& EARTH. Angelic and Human.

The Pre-eminence He Enjoys. v. 11.

1. EXALTED. Takes His place of unchallenged elevation.

2. AS HEAD. Indicating Rank and authority.
3. ABOVE ALL. All creatures subservient to Him.

The Position He Fills. v. 12.

1. RICHES. He possesses all.
2. HONOUR. He surpasses all.
3. REIGN. He rules all.
4. POWER. He controls all.
5. MIGHT. He surpasses all.
6. PROMOTION. He elevates all.
7. STRENGTH. He equips all.

The Power He Displays. v. 12.

1. The Means of it. Hand.
2. The Measure of it. Humanity, all.

The Promotion He Bestows. v. 12.

His *Ability* to make great. (Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon).

His *Ability* to give strength. (Samson with Philistines).

The Praise He Merits. v. 13.

Thanksgiving, for what we receive.
Praise for what He is.

The Palace He Indwells. v. 16. Ch. 22.14 : Ch. 29.2.

Preparation David Made.
Profusion David Provided.
Pleasure God Received.

Thus we learn that God is Head over all in Heaven and over Creation.

HEADSHIP—GOD AND CHRIST (POSITIONAL)

Here we attempt to explain the unexplainable. This headship can only be positional, and does not place the Christ inferior to the Father. If that were so, then the doctrine of the Trinity would be in dispute. In His humanity, Christ never surrendered His Deity. He became for a little while, lower than, but never inferior to angels, with a view to the sufferings of death. Likewise, He accepted the limitations humanity involved. Wrong thoughts on Headship produce

wrong conclusions on its nature. As a man, walking for God on alien soil, He received instructions from His God, morning by morning, even as a father would counsel his son on setting out from home on family business. The picture always breaks down when attempting to illustrate the actions of Divine Beings by human standards.

If we accept, and I trust we do, that the head of every man is Christ, that the head of the woman is the man, then we are at least prepared in spirit to examine the headship of God with Christ.

1 Cor. 11, 3, does not say, "The head of the Son is the Father"; but "the head of Christ is God." This statement can be understood when we view the Lord Jesus as a man, in subordination to His Father as God; as a servant doing the will of His Master in loyal service, and as a sacrifice on the altar, satisfying the demands of God. We will note the scriptures "nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done," "I delight to do Thy will" and also "That the world may know I love the Father": Headship is love expressed in unquestioning obedience, and is the acceptance of a position of subjection. Thus God is the Head of Christ in subordination as a Man, and in supremacy as God in Heaven with Christ on Earth, and in substitution as providing an acceptable sacrifice relative to the violated Throne of God.

It is clearly asserted in 1 Cor. 15.28, that "when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." This defines the period of Christ's subjection to God as being associated with the end of the Millennium and into the Eternal state. Thus God, Who is exalted above all, will forever be "all in all": that is all things in every respect, both in Heaven and in earth! Well might we exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," Romans 11.33. "How Unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out!" The unexplainable has become intelligible by revelation.

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"We have . . . an anchor . . . within the veil—the Forerunner . . . even Jesus." Heb. 7 : 19, 20.

I look **around** me, and think how many are in the same trouble as myself, perhaps much greater, and they have no Father to go to. I look **behind** me, and think of all the way I have been led, and the mercy upon mercy which I have experienced. I look **beneath** me, and think of the hell which I deserve, but which has no place for me. I look **before** and **above** me, and think of my Heaven at the door. Jesus my forerunner there, my God there, where through wondrous grace I shall soon be myself. And by the time I have looked at this last, all my trouble is gone.

—WORDS IN SEASON

RECONCILIATION

Sin has dislocated the whole moral order of God in the universe. It has robbed Him of all His delight in the works of His hands. In the inspired record of His creative operations we are told repeatedly that "God saw that it was good." At the close of the sixth day's work, when the man was made, a stronger expression is used : "Behold, it was very good." How long the Divine delight in His handiwork was suffered to continue we know not ; but the very next page of our Bible tells us of man's revolt against the Creator, whereby he involved himself, and the whole system dependent upon him, in ruin and misery. From the third chapter of Genesis we pass to the sixth, and read : "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

If matters had been suffered to rest there, the triumph of Satan would have been complete. But that could not be. The infinite resources of God's wisdom, grace, and power have provided means whereby the whole ruined system shall be restored to its Maker. The basis of this reconciliation is the blood of Christ, which, Col. i. 20 tells us, has already made peace, with a view to reconciling to God all things on earth and all things in heaven. The hour has not yet arrived for the realisation of this. In His long-suffering, God is still bearing with His adversaries, both angelic and human ; but when His long-suffering reaches its appointed limit, He will exert His power, and rid Himself of all who continue to oppose His will. The heavens will first be cleared, the final

conflict there being described in Rev. xii. 7-9 ; the clearance of the earth will follow quickly. When the whole scene, both above and below, has been purged by judgment, new heavens and a new earth will appear, wherein righteousness will dwell eternally. In the new creation, with the triumphant Second Man at its head, God will find full delight, the reconciling blood being the moral foundation of it all.

Though the reconciliation of things awaits a day yet to come, the reconciliation of persons is being effected now. The Gospel is a ministry of reconciliation, and is addressed to all ; none need remain outside of its priceless blessings. But only those who unfeignedly believe in the Son of God and His sacrifice are, or ever will be, restored to God. It was to such, and such only, that the Apostle wrote, "You that were once alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and irreproachable in His sight" (Col. i. 21-22).

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



*Now 32 Pages
of Sound Doctrine*

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HE IS COMING !

He is coming! He is coming!
Our long-looked-for, absent Lord!
He is coming for His people,
As He promised in His Word.
He is coming! He is coming!
Don't you feel that He is near?
He is on the very threshold,
Soon His voice will greet your ear.

He is coming! O what rapture!
Our beloved One is near.
He is coming! He is coming!
Soon His loving voice we'll hear.
He is coming! Are you ready?
Is your lamp all trimmed and bright?
Are you waiting for the morning?
Are you looking toward the light?

He is coming! He is coming!
Hark His footsteps drawing near!
How it thrills your very being,
As you list His voice to hear!
Lo, the eastern sky is glowing,
Soon the glorious day will break,
Soon He'll burst upon our vision;—
O, ye sleeping saints, awake!

Soon the "trump of God" will call us,
Soon we'll meet Him in the air,—
Him, the altogether lovely,
And the fairest of the fair.
He is coming! He is coming!
Cast the shades of night away!
He is coming! Our Beloved!
Dawns at last the glorious day.

HEADSHIP (continued)

by J. CAMPBELL, Larkhall

HEADSHIP—CHRIST AND MAN (ABSOLUTE)

Before we elaborate on this aspect of Headship, some facts may be stated, which will be of assistance in our exposition.

1. Headship is an Ordinance of God.
2. Headship requires two parties.
3. Headship requires two parties to be in agreement.
4. Headship, if accepted, brings harmony and joy.
5. Headship, if unacknowledged, destroys important relationships.
6. Headship, if unacknowledged, produces conflicts.
7. Headship, if unacknowledged, retards spiritual progress.

Paul's first statement in 11.3 indicates the Corinthians were ignorant of the truth of Headship. "I would have you know" How often he had to expose their lack of knowledge. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren," they, who prided themselves on their boasted gift. I suggest that Christ is the head of every man, because:—

Christ created man. He is his head Creatorially.
Christ died for every man. He is his head Redemptively.
Christ will judge every man. He is his head Judicially.

We see, then, Christ has a claim Creatorially, Redemptively and Judicially. He is the head of every man irrespective of Race, Colour, Creed or Generation. The Scholarly with the illiterate, the illustrious with the obscure. There are no exceptions or exemptions here.

The word for "MAN" in 1 Cor. 11, has 17 mentions. Twice it should read, "anyone"; Verses 16 and 34, In one occasion, V. 28, it is Anthropos, one of the human race, and in the 14 other mentions, it is Aner, an adult male. We are left in no doubt as to its meaning. Some, to evade the implications of Headship, would translate the word = Husband = such a distortion leaves the text in confusion.

Christ is his head Creatorially. John 1.3. All things were "made by Him," a positive statement; "Without Him was not any thing made which was made", a negative statement; amplifying the former.

Christ is his head Redemptively. He died for every man,

whether man comes into the good and blessing of his atoning death or not. God's offer of Salvation is, "Unto all," but only "upon all" who believe.

Christ is his head Judicially. "God hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the World in righteousness, by that Man," i.e. Christ. "Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that He is Lord!"

In these relationships, the second partner is not consulted, for his or her approval; the principle is stated as being inflexible, not one for discussion, argument or compromise. It is already laid down autocratically in this section to the Corinthians.

On reading the epistle, how would the Corinthians understand such statements, in the light of local conditions? Was the Headship of Christ being violated in the company, likewise the Headship of man with the woman. And was the Headship of God with Christ fully appreciated?

Let us examine the Headship of Christ with every man first, as this is the order in which it comes. Does the principle reflect unfavourably on their sectarian utterances in Ch. 1.12, where every one of them were saying, "I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ!" The first two were clear evidence of the Headship of Christ being denied. To say, amidst such confusion, "I am of Christ", seems commendable, until we read, in verse 13, "Is Christ divided?" and the question is so framed in Greek as to demand an affirmative answer. Here is division in the body. Ch. 12.12. "So also is the Christ". So that to say, in conditions of division, "I am of Christ", likewise merits stern rebuke. "Is Christ divided?"

I judge this was questioning Christ's headship with men—saved though they be—as also the case of the brother in Ch. 5 who had unlawful intercourse with his step-mother; likewise, the law-seeking brother in ch. 6, violates the headship of Christ.

Next, the headship of the man with the woman. In this very chapter, she is seen as dishonouring her head (the man) v. 5 and 13, by her uncovered head in prayer or prophesying; whether at home or in church is not distinguished here.

The Headship of God with Christ is introduced to add authority to the first two headships, for it is suggested, that if Christ accepted the headship of God, and He did: it is

expected that men will accept Christ's, and the woman the man's.

Paul understood what he was writing about. He had paid the price in acknowledged headship. Persecuted by his own nation, and by false brethren who would add Law to Grace. This is more than courage. It is conviction!. His, "What wilt Thou have me to do", binds him forever to Christ and his link in Headship.

Christ's headship with men, creatorially, redemptively and judicially places them under tremendous responsibility, when that headship is seen as operating at man's birth, throughout his life, and into eternity; all embracive, never a moment when he can claim to be exempt from its import.

We can now move in our consideration to other aspects :

HEADSHIP—CHRIST and THE CHURCH (ABSOLUTE)

When we note Christ is the Head of the Church, we speak of it in its Body aspect, not its local setting. There are those in the Body who do not meet with the local Church. The local church in any locality, can be, and usually is less than the Body. On occasions it can be more than the Body, if some gather who are not saved, with them. All the saved ones in any locality should gather with fellow believers in testimony to and for Christ. At one point in time, this was true, Acts 2.44. The next time this takes place, will be when the saved dead and the saved living meet in the air, at the Lord's second Coming. Between these two events, Christ exercises, and we are expected to recognise, His Headship in the Church.

He is Head of the Church because He:—

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Loved the Church | Eph. 5.25 |
| 2. Gave Himself for the Church | 5.25 |
| 3. Set her apart for sanctification | 5.26 |
| 4. He will present her to Himself | 5.27 |

He is "Head over all to the Church" Eph. 1.22, the same thought as in 1 Chron. 29.11, where the Lord is seen as "exalted as Head above all"

He is Head over every member; Male and Female.
He is Head over every servant; Prominent and obscure.
He is Head over every deacon who ministers.
He is Head over every overseer who guides.

He is Head in every exercise : Reception, Feeding, Guiding, Disciplining, Charging, supporting, comforting, correcting or excommunicating.

He is Head at every Meeting; Remembrance, Prayer, Ministry and Gospel. The Church is an organism of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who meet regularly. They are not an organisation. They own no earthly head. They are guided by the Scriptures, as to doctrine, and led out by shepherds, set among them by the Holy Spirit. They claim affinity with all believers, similarly gathered. We have already noted, Christ is the Head of every man. Christ is the head of every so gathered company. He is the Head of every believer in the Eody, whether meeting regularly or not with the local Church. Christ is the Head of all who, at any time, constitute the Body on earth. As gathered to His Name, we acknowledge His Headship.

Christ expresses His Headship in many ways. He has elected us, the Church, for future glory, and has brought us to faith in Himself. He instructs us from His Holy Word, protects us from the evil one, provides for us and one day will come for us. By His death on the Cross, He demonstrates His unfailing love, which withholds no good thing from us, and is presently preparing us for an eternity with, and like Him!

He is also Head of all principalities and powers, and is become the Head of the Corner. (Matt. 21.42: Mark 12.10: Luke 20.17: Acts 4.11; 1 Peter 2.7).

HEADSHIP—MAN AND CREATION (DELEGATED)

The Triune Godhead, at creation, placed mankind, by Royal decree, over the creatures He made. In the sea, in the air, and over the cattle and creeping things. Dominion carries the thought of suppression and treading down. Two words in Gen. 9.2. describe a change in the attitude of the animal creation to mankind. These words are Fear—*MORA*, meaning reverence, and Dread—*CHATH*, Terror. God brought them to Adam to have them named. There is no evidence of fear or dread in Gen. 2, nor until after the flood; only when man is allowed animal flesh without blood, is this fear instilled into fish, fowl, and cattle. Man is now a hunter of them. It would seem, that before the flood, the animals required no domestication: even Cain was told, "Sin offering lieth at the door." So Adam would have the animals to

help in his husbandry; their strength to assist in ploughing, their milk to augment his diet, but not their meat. Noah was the first man allowed this. James tells us that every kind of beasts, birds, serpents and sea creatures have been tamed of mankind. Here is headship explained in a good sense. Baalam's female ass, speaking with man's voice, protests at being beaten: Both illustrate man's sovereignty over the animal world.

God speaks, and the whale vomits Jonah. God speaks, and ravens feed Elijah. Christ spake, and a fish gathered the tribute money from the sea. Man has his dominion from God, Who controls all flesh for His Glory.

HEADSHIP—MAN AND THE WOMAN (ABSOLUTE)

In the various grades and gradations of Headship, that obtaining between man and woman have caused much thought, and evidenced much rebellion, bringing with them, disruption in the domestic, matrimonial, parental, industrial and spiritual realms. The spirit of hostility to a Divine Ordinance from the female side, is readily detected from the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 11.3 is a statement without restriction or escape. The man is the head of the woman. First, let us examine what headship is not. It does not invest the man with superiority over the woman, nor does it place the woman in a position of inferiority. As her head, God would hold the man accountable before Him for the womenfolk God had placed in those spheres of life associated with him, the man. Thus his marriage partner, his sisters and his daughters, whether in adulthood, spinsterhood, as minors or in their majority. As a Mother, she is in headship relationship with her husband, as is his Wife. As a sister, she is under her Father as a Parent, even as is his Daughter. The Aunt or niece come under headship in their respective homes. Thus woman is under headship, wherever she dwells. This teaching stands opposed to the current demands of the Women's Liberation Movement.

HEADSHIP—HUSBAND AND WIFE (SELECTIVE)

There are some outstanding differences between Headship and Lordship. We do well to note the main feature wherein they differ.

Headship is more extensive. It operates in the Heavens and

the earth. Every person is subject to Christ, whether acknowledged or not.

Lordship is limited to redeemed beings, who have acknowledged Christ as Lord, in their lives.

When we examine the Headship of the Husband with the Wife, we are confined to the Matrimonial realm. The subjection of the wife is:—

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Practical. | Wives <i>submit</i> yourselves. | V.22. |
| 2. | Personal. | Wives submit <i>yourselves</i> . | V.22. |
| 3. | Ideal. | As unto the <i>Lord</i> . | V.22. |
| 4. | Comparable. | Even as <i>Christ</i> . | V.23. |
| 5. | Beneficial. | <i>Saviour</i> of the Body. | V.23. |
| 6. | Total. | In <i>everything</i> . | V.24. |
| 7. | Doctrinal. | Church <i>subject</i> to Christ. | V.24. |

Her subjection is *Practical*. In submitting to her husband, she is not being asked to do the impossible.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| It is <i>Personal</i> . | Yourselves : your own husband. |
| It is <i>Ideal</i> . | As unto the Lord. Highest standard. |
| It is <i>Comparable</i> . | Even as Christ, the Great Exemplar. |
| It is <i>Beneficial</i> . | The Saviour of the body, Spiritual and Physical. |
| It is <i>Total</i> . | In everything, not somethings. |
| It is <i>Doctrinal</i> . | The husband the head. God's pronouncement. |

In conclusion, there are two other spheres where Christ is the Head.

He is Head of all principality and power. Colossians 2.10.
He is Head of the Corner. 1 Peter 2.7.

SAILING WITH PAUL

by J. G. GOOD

How often has inspiration been drawn from Acts 27, by those passing through a time of trial, overcome by the force of circumstances, at wits end corner, despite the darkness of the clouds there was a brightness, the Presence of One Who worketh all things according to the good pleasure of His will. This chapter has been viewed as the passage of the Christian over the tempestuous sea of life, there is a

lesson to be learned of far greater import, namely, that we must be subservient to and in the current of the will of God for us.

This chapter is a shining illustration of the revealing of God's will in the life of Paul, we see as we read the book of the Acts, that there was a synchronising of Paul's will with God's will. Paul's burning desire was that he might visit Rome, not merely as a traveller or adventurer, but as a herald of the Cross. God's plan for Paul was that he would be in Rome to bear witness before kings (Acts 9. 15), The following references from the Acts corroborate this; "I must also see Rome" (19. 21), "So must thou bear witness also at Rome" (23. 11), "Unto Caesar shalt thou go" (25. 12) "Thou must stand before Caesar" (27. 24).

We speak of God's will for us after having plotted our own pathway, but surely here is a lesson for us, we must be in harmony with the will of God for us as individuals to know and experience Divine intervention in these lives of ours. It is possible to thwart God's will for us, by failing to discern and following our own desires. On the other hand there is no power on earth which can intervene, relative to the purposes of God in the life of the individual resigned to the will of God. Dismay and distress there may be in the voyage to Rome, but the power and purposes of God prevailed as the historian records, "so we came to Rome" (28-14).

'He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost,
God's will is sweetest to him when,
It triumphs at his cost'

Let us voyage with Paul learning to trust and triumph, discerning through the darkness, knowing with assurance that He will bring us safely to our desired haven.

PAUL IN THE SUNSHINE (1. 8)

With his Fellow Prisoners (1. 2). It is fitting that the centurion should be one named Julius, (wheatsheaf), having as a passenger and prisoner the apostle of the resurrection. Aristarchus is worthy of mention, there are three references to this brother in the New Testament, (Acts 20. 4) a fellow traveller, (Col. 4. 10) a fellow worker, and (Acts 27. 2) a fellow prisoner. Is there not a significance in this, no men-

tion of a word spoken or of a specific work accomplished, his name means 'best ruler,' would this speak of the One Who as the Comforter who will be with us until the end, (John 16. 13), the work of the Holy Spirit in and with the believer.

With his Fellow Believers (3). Paul revelled in the company of fellow Christians, loyalty was treasured by Paul, if there is a blessing taken for granted today it is this manifold blessing of fellowship with the people of God. This was not only Paul's attitude towards other believers, but it was their attitude toward him. (Acts 28. 15). Appii Forum was 51 miles, and the Three Taverns 33 miles respectively from Rome, could there be a greater testimony to the love and esteem of the believers in Rome for Paul, as they journeyed in primitive conditions to meet the beloved Paul.

With his Fellow Passengers (4.8). Paul had a compelling committal to the service of God, it might be a ship of Adramythium or of Alexandria it mattered not, he never missed the opportunity to witness, not vindictive or arrogant, but in a practical and powerful way he testified to the keeping power of Him Whom he loved and served. To his fellow passengers he demonstrated that his faith in God was expressed in practical terms and not merely theoretical, (see 27.19; 27.34 and 28.3). Gospel preaching will carry little weight if it is not accompanied by a willingness to be identified with the ordinary things of life and the burden of living. Nearness to our God brings with it a sympathy with the needs of our fellow men, and we show this in a practical way.

PAUL IN THE SHADOW (9. 19).

Paul's Premonition Concerning the Voyage (9.10). The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him (Psalm 25. 14) how true this was of Paul in this instance. There is such a state of spiritual attainment whereby many are initiated into the mind of God with regard to God's will for them. The shadows in life tend to cast us upon the wisdom of God, provoking a trust and a confidence in the One Who never errs.

The Centurion's Opposition regarding the Voyage (11.14) "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2. 14). The natural man can never be convicted of

spiritual and eternal realities apart from the operation of the Spirit of God. Little did the centurion know that his physical well being during the voyage was assured simply because he was in the company of the man of God's purposes.

The Ship's Disposition during the Voyage (15.19). We can almost hear the howl of the wind, the creaking of the timbers, as we read this graphic account recorded for us by Luke. It is in the storms of life that we learn to lean hard upon God, experimental knowledge is priceless. David refused the armour of Saul, (1 Sam. 17. 39). God tests individuals, to be persuaded by others apart from a personal conviction is certain to end in failure.

PAUL IN THE STORM (20. 32).

Storms are the test of character, how we react under pressure. Paul's joy in the Lord, certainly did not depend on circumstances.

Hopeful amid the Hopeless (20.22). Despite the severity which filled the hearts of the mariners with fear, never was there a doubt in the mind of Paul as to the outcome of the voyage. The words of counsel and comfort came not from the master of the ship, or from the centurion, but from the prisoner, how amazing can be the transformation when a sense of the Lord's presence is realised.

Fearless amid the Fearful (23.26). Paul was conscious of the presence of God with him, more than sufficient for any emergency. Faith grasping the word of promise in the hour of crisis. How important to hear above the tumult of our day, when infidelity and modernism prevail, the words of Paul, 'I believe God.' There can never be questionings or reasonings as far as the child of God is concerned, but in every circumstance of life, and in local assembly life too, we can take no better stand than 'I believe God'!

Restful amid the Restless (27.32). "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved" verse 31. How true this is in the life of a believer, that deliverance can only be experienced from a situation which demands it. The ship of our circumstances can become the ship of communion, Paul's thorn in the flesh and his infirmities were the means whereby Paul knew in a real way that the "power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12. 9) Paul was not a victim of

circumstances, but he was content in spite of them (Phill. 4. 11).

'O for the peace that floweth as a river,
Making earth's desert places bloom and smile,
O for the faith to grasp heaven's bright for ever,
Amid the shadows of earth's 'little while'.'

PAUL IN THE SHIPWRECK (32. 44).

Paul affirms the Divine word of Promise (32.35). By exhortation and example Paul shows his concern for the physical needs of all on board. "Not a hair shall fall from the head of any of you" verse 34. We can be bold in our testimony when we have a 'Thus saith the Lord.' Again we repeat the importance of having that experimental knowledge of the ways of God.

The Company accepts the Divine word of Promise (36.41) What a change of heart, 'Then they were all of good cheer' verse 36. How powerful was the testimony of Paul, based on a sanctuary life, the manner of Paul's witness was that of persuasion and appeal. It is possible to antagonise our hearers by a rough and vindictive approach, making it well nigh impossible to be recognised as those who 'have been with Jesus' (Acts 4. 13).

The Lord fulfils the Divine word of Promise (42.44). When we read the words, 'So we came to Rome' (Acts 28. 14), a simple statement, and yet how much was involved. The voyage could have been smooth and easy, but could the power and presence of God have been realised in so great a measure. 'Believe ye that I am able to do this' (Matt. 9. 28). There may be fear and frustration but there will assuredly be fulfilment, but there must be on our part a recognition of and resignation to the will of God for us!

"In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house."

—Genesis 31. 40,41.

One much greater than Jacob said, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa 27.3). In both cases care is given night and day, but with what different results. Notwithstanding all Jacob's watchfulness he has to confess that some of his flock were "torn" and others were "stolen." The earthly shepherd could watch, but he could not keep. Christ is "able to keep." He could say, "Of them which Thou gavest Me, have I lost none."

—F. E. Turner.

ATONEMENT

by **W. W. FEREDAY**

Atonement in its primary meaning is the vindication of the claims of the throne of God in regard to human sin. This stands out very clearly in the High Priest's procedure on the Day of Atonement in Israel as described in Leviticus xvi. First he carried into the holiest the blood of the bullock for himself and for his house ; then he presented the blood of the goat for the people of Israel ; but not until these things were accomplished was the scapegoat dismissed with all the sins of the people upon its head. God was considered first, then man.

Sin is a grievous offence in the eyes of the Creator. It has destroyed His delight in man ; it has wrought mischief and ruin in His creation both above and below ; it challenges His authority perpetually ; and it menaces His throne. Not even Divine longsuffering, still less Divine grace, could be shewn to the guilty save on the ground of atonement. The mercy-seat in Israel's tabernacle was God's earthly throne, but it typified His throne in the heavens. The animal blood that was sprinkled on and before His earthly throne to Him from year to year of the richer blood that would in due season be shed—the blood of His own dear Son. God has signified His acceptance of the precious blood of Christ by raising Him up from the dead, and seating Him in glory at His own right hand. The Old Testament declares "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul"; the New Testament solemnly insists that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Lev. xvii. 11 ; Heb. ix. 22).

Good resolutions and deeds of charity cannot be accepted in atonement for sin. To present them to God for such a purpose would be to repeat the grave blunder of Cain. Abel's lamb was "a more excellent sacrifice" than the products of his brother's toil. The one was a humble acknowledgement of guilt ; the other was a virtual repudiation of guilt. God could not do otherwise than resent the attitude of Cain, while opening the door for repentance even for so serious an affront.

The Christian has the testimony of no less a person than God the Holy Ghost that all the claims of the Divine throne have been met by the one offering of Jesus. No other

offering of any kind whatsoever is required or could be accepted. To put anything human alongside of Christ's perfect sacrifice would be to question its worth and efficacy. If God is satisfied with what Christ has accomplished, the Christian may well be satisfied also. The Israelite on the afternoon of the Day of Atonement had the comfort of seeing all his sins dismissed with the scapegoat ; the Christian has the assurance from God that his sins and iniquities He will remember no more (Heb. x. 17). There is this immense difference however between the Israelite and the Christian : the one was set right with God for twelve months by Aaron's atoning work ; the other has been set right with God for ever by the infinitely more precious work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Sanctified" and "perfected" are God's grand terms descriptive of the present position of all believers.

Notes on Revelation

by



JAMES FLANIGAN
NORTHERN IRELAND

AN INTRODUCTION

John, the Beloved, has been privileged to write for us three parts of our New Testament, and these are related to the Past, the Present, and the Future. From his memories of the past he has gathered precious clusters of fragrant things, and has given us the fourth Gospel. For our present guidance and help he has written for us three small letters. As the New Testament seer he has given us his Patmos visions in the "Book of the Revelation," sometimes called the "Apocalypse".

In his Gospel, John never once mentions his own name, but five times calls himself, "the disciple whom Jesus loved". In the Revelation, he five times refers to himself by name—"I John". It is highly unlikely that the writer of the Revelation could have so simply signed himself, with no additional, identifying, term or designation, had he not been the aged, sole-surviving Apostle who gave us the

Gospel and the letters—the John so well known by first Century Christians. He is the Daniel of the New Testament, the man greatly beloved, of the Church Age.

Without doubt, the Apocalypse is the most neglected, most un-read book of the New Testament. Believers may often advance reasons why this is so, but there are many reasons why it ought not to be so.

(i) *This is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament.*

We have books which are Historical, and books which are Doctrinal; we have some which are Devotional, and some which are Practical; but only one book is purely Prophetical. It is sad that the only book of prophecy in the New Testament should be so neglected.

(ii) *This is the final, closing, book of our Bible.*

There is undoubtedly a Divine arrangement in the order of the books of our Bible. Genesis was not the first to be written, but it is the obvious book to introduce all the others. Revelation was not the last to be written, but it is the great closing counterpart to Genesis. The comparisons and contrasts of Genesis and Revelation have often been pointed out. How much that has its beginning in Genesis, has its culmination in Revelation. How much finds its fruition in Revelation that had its roots and origin in Genesis. Like corresponding clasps on either end of a girdle, these two great books complement each other. They unite to form the complete circle of Divine revelation. Only the Apocalypse could intelligently be placed last as the capstone of Holy Scripture. We must not neglect this closing book.

(iii) *This is the only book which opens with a specific promise of blessing for those who read and obey.*

While this may primarily be a reference to public reading, in the days when not everyone had the ability or privilege to read personally; and while also the principle of blessing for obedience is everywhere in Scripture, nevertheless, this is the only book so to be introduced. We must not miss that blessing.

(iv) *This is the REVELATION of Jesus Christ.*

It is not "The Mystery", but "The Revelation". It is the Apocalypse, which means that it is an unveiling, an unfold-

ing, of the Christ. Is it a revelation given *to* Him? Or is it a revelation given concerning Him? Are both true? Either way, it is a revelation. Here is a rebuke to our neglect, and a great encouragement to read.

How often too, in this connection, is the title of the book misquoted. It is the "Revelation"—not the "Revelations". There is no "s". It is not a plural word. This is not quibbling, or unimportant. Many revelations indeed there may be throughout the book, revelations in every chapter, but these all blend together to become one harmonious Revelation of the Lord Jesus. It is one unveiling of Himself.

An analysis of this book is difficult. It does not readily lend itself to simple divisions and sub-divisions, as do some other books. So many crises, parentheses, climaxes, defy any straightforward analysis. There is however, one interesting way of dividing the visions.

Throughout the course of the Revelation, John's position and circumstances are changed several times. Indeed we find him in five different positions. The visions then given to him are accurately and absolutely in accord with his position at the time.

In chapter 1, John is bowed low at the Feet of the Lord of the churches. On a rocky, barren island, so symbolic of our place of pilgrimage and testimony, he kneels at the Saviour's Feet. Where better to receive the messages of chapters 2 and 3, concerning the ministry of the lampstands, the churches? In chapter 4 his position is changed. He is caught up to the Throne. What more fitting place from which to see the workings of Sovereignty? From this glorious vantage point John will see the purposes of God being accomplished.

In chapter 13 his position is changed once again. He is now at the sea-shore. Here will he see the waves and billows of democracy rolling into anarchy and tyranny, and, rising out of the sea, the Dictator of the last days.

In chapter 17 there is a further change, and John is taken to the wilderness. In desert conditions he sees the great Babylon Mystery—a fitting prelude to his final position and the closing visions.

In chapter 21 he is taken to the mountain top. From this lofty viewpoint John sees the glory of the New Jerusalem and the ultimate bliss of the Christ and His people.

Five positions then, and five series of visions completely in harmony with the Apostle's circumstances. To summarise:

- Ch. 1. At the Lord's Feet to learn the Principles of Testimony.
- Ch. 4. At the Throne, to learn the Purposes of Sovereignty.
- Ch. 13. At the Sea-shore, to see the Progress of Iniquity.
- Ch. 17. In the Wilderness, to see the Power of Apostasy.
- Ch. 21. On the Mountain, to receive the Promise of Glory.

The Book of Revelation is a book of symbols. The truths given us here are conveyed in the language of symbolism. So the opening verse states specifically. The word "signify", is literally "SIGN-ify"—to make known by signs. Our approach then, will be to see symbolism, unless, for some obvious reason, the passage should be taken literally. We shall find these symbols drawn from almost every part of life. There is symbolism from

(i) MATHEMATICS.

What a variety of numbers there is in Revelation! 2, 3, $3\frac{1}{2}$, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 24, 42, 144, 666, 1,000, 1260, 1,600, 7,000, 12,000, 144,000, 100,000,000, and 200,000,000. There is a predominance of the number "7".

(ii) ZOOLOGY.

Horses, Lambs, Lion, Calf, Leopard, Bear, Frogs, Locusts, Scorpions, Eagle, Vulture, Fish, Serpent.

(iii) BOTANY.

Trees and Grass, Wheat and Barley and Grapes.

(iv) NATURE.

Mountains, Rivers, Seas, Fountains, Rain, Hail, Earthquake.

(v) ASTRONOMY.

Sun, Moon, and Stars. Lightning and Thunder.

(vi) GEOGRAPHY.

Jerusalem, Babylon, Egypt, Sodom, the River Euphrates.

(vii) MINERALS.

Gold (Lamps, Vials, Censer, Altar, Crowns, Cup) Silver, Precious Stones, Pearls, Ivory, Wood, Brass, Iron, Marble.

(viii) COLOURS.

Red, Green, Scarlet, Purple, Black, but especially White.

There are, in this book of symbols, Men with Swords, Reapers with Sickles, Trumpeters with Trumpets. There are Flutes, Lyres and Harps.

It is interesting, that in all the book of Revelation, there is not a single direct quotation from the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the book is saturated with Old Testament imagery, drawn especially from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. For instance—

The Glorified Christ of ch. 1 is in Daniel ch. 10.

The Rainbow-circled Throne of ch. 4 is in Ezekiel ch. 1.

The Scroll of ch. 5 may be seen in Ezekiel ch. 2 and Zechariah ch. 5.

The Measuring Reed, the Two Witnesses, the Two Olive Trees, and the Lampstands of ch. 11 are in Zechariah ch. 4.

Beasts from the Sea, as in ch. 13 are in Daniel ch. 7.

Gog and Magog are in Ezekiel chs. 38 and 39.

The Great Assize of ch. 20 is in Daniel ch. 7.

The New Jerusalem, the River of Life, and the Tree of Life, are in Ezekiel ch. 47.

Many of these symbols are explicitly explained for us. For the rest, may we approach the book in a spirit of wondering humility, asking for Divine aid to know the mind of the Spirit.

May this great book become indeed to us—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ."
(To be continued)

“ . . . SPARED NOT . . . ”

by **CLIFF JONES, Cardiff**

Our God is a God whose resources and attributes are infinite. He made all things, John 1.3. He owns all things, Ps. 50.10. His power is limitless—"For with God nothing shall be impossible," Luke 1.37, Rev. 19.6, Matt. 19.26, Job 42.2. God's love and mercy are infinite and everlasting, 1 John 4.8, Jer. 31.3, Eph. 2.4,5.

All God's attributes are infinite and He therefore experiences an infinite depth of feeling. The love of God the Father for God the Son, and the love of the Son for the Father are infinite and cannot be comprehended.

God's holiness is absolute—"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy . . .", Rev. 15.4. Our God is absolutely holy and righteous, Ps. 145.17, and cannot tolerate sin, Hab. 1.13.

Sin is an affront to a Holy God and we read, in passages which the Holy Spirit caused to be written for our admonition, of occasions when, because of their sin, angels and people were not spared by God. We read that ". . . God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly", 2 Pet. 2.45.

We read in Rom. 11.21 ". . . God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

In these verses we see the hatred and severity of God in relation to sin. Those of us who have been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ know something of the holiness of God and of the love of God in that He spared not His own beloved Son that we might be spared an eternity in hell.

The death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross enables us to appreciate, in some measure, God's hatred of sin and His love for us, for "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him," 1 John 4.9. Love results in giving and God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son to take the punishment for sinners such as we are, John 3.16.

There cannot be a greater demonstration of love than the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. 5.8. Such perfect love will withhold no good thing from us. Knowing these things we can rejoice in the words "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8.32.

We have peace with God for, by grace, we know whom

we have believed, 2 Tim. 1.12. We know the love of God who never changes, 1 John 4.16, James 1.17, Mal. 3.6. His love was and is so great that He spared not His only begotten Son that we might be spared the wrath of God.

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(9) THE PRE-EXISTENCE, ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST

By eternal nature the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. He did not become God's Son at the Incarnation neither when He rose from the dead (Acts 13.33; Rom. 1.4), though by the latter event His Sonship was fully manifested. He is the "Only-Begotten" of the Father, of the same nature and with the same powers, to Whom equal worship is due.

He is the Divine Logos, in the beginning with God, the full and final revelation of God, and Himself very God (John 1.1; Col. 1.15). If our Lord had no existence prior to His Incarnation at Bethlehem, the Christian claim that He came to be the living Revelation of God is at once invalidated and His claim to have revealed the Father is abrogated.

CLAIMING EQUALITY

The Lord's discourse on the Bread of Life is replete with proof of His Pre-existence. He is the Antitype of the manna; He is the Living Bread out of Heaven (Jn. 6.50, 51); Christ in His Person is the Bread of Life (v.35-50), here in verses 51-58 He is the spiritual food of the believers in the Redemptive work of His Death. Verse 62 indicates a relationship prior to Bethlehem condescension (John 1.1). Before Abraham was "I AM" (8.58). He is Jehovah, the eternally self-existent One; the provider and sustainer of Divine life (6.35). The idea of "Sonship" is necessitated by a revelation of the "Fatherhood" of God in the Sacred Trinity. John's Gospel clearly presents the Eternal nature of the Sonship of Christ (1.14, 18; 3.16-18).

The expression "Only-Begotten," used of Christ points to something ABSOLUTE, but "Firstborn" expresses what is RELATIVE.

This title "Only-Begotten" is used five times in reference to Christ. The Lord ever did and ever will occupy this peculiar and unique place in the Father's thoughts and affections. It marks off His unique Sonship from the "sons of God" (v.12). The title "Son of Man" is used only by our Lord, never by His disciples. It does not refer to His origin from man, but His relationship to them, it links Him with earth (Psa. 8).

COMBATING HERESY

The error taught at Colosse was undermining the Christian system, it was twofold; doctrinal and practical, theological and ethical. All the glories essential to Deity are the prerogatives of Christ, He is absolutely supreme. His identity as Son (1.13), His image, demonstrating the subsistence of Deity (v.15). The Invisible and Unknowable God has revealed Himself fully and finally in and through His Son, Who being His Father's "image" has manifested Him. His Infinity is displayed in Creatorship (v.16). "Who is" in v.15, and "He is" in v.17 declare His Pre-existence. "HE" emphasizes His Personality, and "IS" His Pre-existence and Self-existence. He is prior to creation, Firstborn of all creation, being Originator of all things, Controller of all things, and Perfecter of all things (v.16, 17).

Hebrews chapter one describes a Personality that precedes time, controlling and governing forces of all history. Everything Divine resides in Him, is manifested in Him and Divine Titles are ascribed to Him. His eternal Sonship as Creator and Heir (v.1, 2); His Expressed Sonship (v.2-4); His Exalted Sonship (v.5); His Exhibited Sonship (v.6).

COMMENDING HUMILITY

Phil. 2.6 is not a discussion in technical theology, but a question of practical ethics. In John 8.58 we have His claim to pre-existence; in Col. 1.16, it is to priority, here in Phil. 2.6 it is His Divine Personality and His condescending stoop is an example of humility. His example is the sum and life of all morality. In v.6 the Pre-existence of Christ in heaven; v.7, 8 the Incarnation of Christ. In v.6 we see the heights of glory, implying the Personality of the Son as distinct from the Father. The Pre-existence of the Son from all eternity; the full and proper Deity of the Son.

He eternally existed in the form of God (v.6). He essentially and eternally was and is, sharer of Divine Nature

and bearer of Divine attributes, that is to say, God. He is supreme in being. The word "Form" means literally that he outwardly manifested the inner reality of His being.

Christ's inner reality was Deity. The equality of Christ's Deity is stressed in the phrase, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He had it as His right. Yet He determined upon an infinite act of self-sacrifice for others and took upon Himself humanity (II Cor. 8.9; John 1.14).

The Son's exercise of His Own Will in contemplation of human need, was to effect redemption. This is the humility of Deity. He is supreme in life—"obedient unto death." His death is an indisputable evidence of His divine life. He is supreme in glory for all eternity (Phil. 2.9-11). God wants Him to be supreme in our lives (v.5).

CONVEYING TRUTH

To claim Messiahship was to claim Deity (Psa. 2.6-12; Psa. 24.7-10; Psa. 45.1-8; 110. In Psa. 2.6 God speaks of Him as "my King;" v. 7 "my Son;" v. 12 "the Son;" v. 8 as the Heir, and in v.9 as the Conqueror. Peter applies Psalm 2 to the Lord (Acts 4.25-28). He is the King of Glory and Lord of Hosts in Psa. 24 with I Cor. 2.8; James 2.1.

These titles are given Him by God and remind us of His coming in glory. God addresses Him as King, His throne is unchangeable (Psa. 45.6). He is the Eternal God and Creator in Psa. 102.25-27, with Heb. 1.8, 10-12.

The Lord quotes Psa. 110.1, as written of Himself (Matt. 22.42-45), Psa. 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the N.T. always referring to the Lord Jesus. He is the Priest (Heb. 5.10). As Jehovah of Hosts (Isa. 6.1-3); His glory is revealed (John 12.41).

His eternal Sonship guarantees redemption, priesthood, Kingship, Headship and every blessing associated with these glorious titles of Christ.

"ZEPHANIAH"

by E. R. BOWER, Malvern Link, Worcs.

The so called 'minor' prophets are a fascinating study. The 'writings' which they provided for their day and generation became Scripture—Holy Scripture,—both to Jew and Gentile. It is the Word of God, not only for the day in, and for, which it was given, but also for all generations

from then until the times of the end when all prophecy will be fulfilled.

Israel had, and has, a belief in the immediate, intermediate and ultimate fulfilment of God's Word as it affects them, and through them the nations, and every Christian believer should have this same confidence for there is without doubt—in this latter two decades of this twentieth century—a growing awareness among the Lord's people—and here it is emphasized that this phrase includes not only God's ancient people, Israel, but also the Christian believer—that we are living, if not actually in the last days, then in that uneasy calm which is the forerunner of the gathering storm indicated by the 'signs of the times', and let all those who acknowledge the Word of God take notice that the rulers of this world are also very aware of the approach of the storm, and humanly speaking there is little that they can do about it.

In view of the foregoing it is to be regretted that so little attention is given to these 'men of God who spoke as they (no less than the 'major' prophets) were moved by the Holy Ghost.' (2 Peter 1.21). These men were the men of the hour. Whether 'major' or 'minor'; whether their writings covered many years or few days is immaterial. They were the chosen mouthpieces for the Holy Spirit of God which moved them to meet a particular circumstance or circumstances, whether occurring at the time of their prophecy or was to occur in the near or distant future. To each was given "according to their several ability" and, fulfilling their tasks—sometimes unwillingly as, for instance, Jonah—they went their way. Herein is a lesson which all may learn and put into practice. The crown of the glory of God, as it is seen in the Church, has many jewels, some large and some small, but each is joined to its fellow by the gold of the crown thus constituting a shining whole.

The name of the prophet—Zephaniah—"Jehovah hides", or "Jehovah protects"—is perhaps an indication of that which God has done, and will yet do, for Israel during the years of dispersion for Zephaniah was the last of the prophets preceding the Captivity. (Cf. Isaiah 26. 20-21; Revelation 12.6).

Contemporary with Jeremiah, it is more than likely that he made his own individual contribution to the revival which

took place in Judah during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 21—25; 2 Chronicles 34—36). The reign of Josiah, though good in itself was, as Josiah himself knew, under the shadow of impending judgment upon Judah and the nations—a judgment which was finally pronounced in the days of Manasseh (2 Kings 21.10-15) and which fell some two generations later. The revival was shortlived for it lasted little more than a generation. It could be said that this revival gave some respite to the nation before judgment fell.

How easy with the benefit of hindsight to point accusing fingers at Israel and at Judah, either because of their continuing disregard of their God, or their failure to maintain the fires of revival. But how long do revivals last? Why do the fires go out? Instance the revivals which have taken place within the history of the last one hundred years. How quickly the fires died away! Seek the answers for such subsequent deadness, then point the fingers—to ourselves! Fires are not maintained without fuel and attention. Too little fuel; too much ash; too little attention; too little care. How true that for every finger pointing at others, there are three pointing to ourselves. The hindsight given by Scripture to the failures of Israel and Judah should be our foresight! And it is the Apostle Paul who gave this lesson to his readers.

It has been affirmed by some that a true understanding of the closing Book of the Scriptures—the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ—can only come from an understanding of the prophets, and in particular, the ‘minor’ prophets. We may notice as we read through Zephaniah’s prophecy just how apocalyptic his words are. He is concerned with the Day of the Lord, nevertheless “The things written aforetime were written for our learning . . .” (Romans 15.4;) and further, these things happened unto them for types (margin): and they are written for our ADMONITION, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Corinthians 10.11). Note: ADMONITION—a putting into mind; a warning.

CHAPTER 1.1. An introduction (i) To the Word of the Lord, and (2) Zephaniah.

The prophecy begins with the ancient formula, “The Word of the Lord came.” How careful the prophets were! Their sayings and their writings were not personal compositions,

but that which 'came' and bore them along. Peter wrote (2.1.21) "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The prerequisite of their speaking was their holiness. How little do we know of the Holy Spirit, let alone being 'borne along' by Him! Is our lack of holiness the stumbling block to the movements of the Holy Spirit?

Zephaniah appears to have been a descendant of Hezekiah (A.V. 'Hizkia), king of Judah, but other than that, nothing is known of the prophets life.

Josiah was fortunate, as we might say, in having Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Hulda the prophetess to guide him during these years of impending judgment. Could the judgment be averted by a revival? No. Deferred maybe, but not averted. The Word of God and hence the purposes of God must stand. But what of that, then present, generation?

We may think of Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Hulda (and do not let us forget the role of the womenfolk!) with Josiah, as the architects of revival and, briefly, it was built upon the foundation of repaired breaches in the House of the Lord, and upon a newly discovered Book of the Law. What better foundations? Another lesson!

It could be that Zephaniah prepared the ground for Jeremiah. "Little men" are very important! How tragic it is, in a day when the word 'revival' appears to be archaic and obsolete, that there are those who would belittle the 'little men' of this generation; denigrating those who do have a care as 'little men with big Bibles.' What a way to speak of their brethren in the Lord! How Pharisaic! These critics follow in the steps of those who spoke of Peter and John as ignorant and unlearned (Acts 4.13). The picture comes to mind of Zedekiah son of Chenaanah (1 Kings 22.24). How many churches are being held together by these 'little men' who, always in their place, constitute the backbone of the local church? Why do we not give credit where it is due, and not omnibus criticism, to these little men with big hearts? Men who have been with Jesus.

CHAPTER 1.2-3. The 'I wills' of judgment. (1) Upon the earth. General.

The evil king Manasseh, despite his late repentance, left a terrible legacy. Jeremiah and the chronicler of 2 Kings 21

had no doubt about this, and it is quite probable that this legacy, in itself, affected the build up to revival, inasmuch as there was an apparent determination by many to go in the way of Manasseh—in much the same way as those who followed in the way of Jeroboan the son of Nebat. It is likewise probable that there was a ‘behind the scenes’ rebellion against the ‘narrowness’ of the true worship which destroyed their many idols, both tangible and intangible, to which they had long given their willing subservience. One of the quirks of human nature is that evil is tolerated in spite of the horrors that only too often flow from it. Manasseh made the streets of Jerusalem to run with blood, yet the people seemed to be quite content to go on in their departure from God and His Word. How soon we become accustomed to evil and the circumstances which accompany it; how soon we become accustomed to the things which ‘creep in’ and allow them to become part and parcel of our ways! This applies both to our moral and our spiritual lives.

The wilderness experience did not eradicate Egypt from Israel’s thoughts or, indeed, their deeds. (Acts 7.40-43; Amos 5.25-26). The goodness and majesty of God their Saviour was, for them, poor substitute for the gods and pleasures of Egypt. So, too, the nations when the final and inevitable judgments of God fall upon them will shew no signs of repentance. (Revelation 20.9).

Zephaniah saw about him the sins of the people which ranged “from gross external to refined internal apostasy” (vv. 5-6), but note how the prophet expresses the will of God in judgment. All things were to be utterly destroyed, or taken away (margin) from the face of the earth— man and beast; the fowls of the heaven and the fish of the sea; the stumbling-blocks or enticements to sin; the idols; the wicked; and man would be cut off from the earth.

This all-embracing judgment would appear to have a point in view beyond the near judgment upon Judah and indeed goes beyond the confines of Judah. Notice the ‘also’ of v. 4 which concerns Judah, as against the ‘earth’ of v. 3. A world engulfing judgment is envisaged. Mankind is bringing much of this judgment upon himself, by its very disregard, especially during the years of industrial development, of its environment. “The day of the Lord is at hand.” (v. 7).

(to be continued)

Samuel among them that call upon His Name. Psalm 99 : 6

Samuel was a man who could pray and get answers from God. The Philistines were stirred up to oppose Israel. "Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him" (1 Sam. 7:9). It is needless to add that the enemy was defeated. Samuel was God's mouthpiece to His people, and the people's intercessor with God. He answered the desire of his mother who, seeing the ruin of the testimony, did not despair, but rather laid hold on God that He would raise up a man to be a link between Himself and His people.

—P. J. Pell

**O Thou by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way !
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod :
Lord, teach us how to pray !**

**The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ**

by
the late
**William
Hoste, B.A.**

**THE HUMANITY
OF CHRIST**

The Person of Christ is the Citadel of Divine Truth, for He became in Incarnation, "the Image of the Invisible God," the "One Mediator between God and man," the only "Way" to the Father, and much else besides. He was the One into whose hands the Father had committed all things. To belittle His Person, then, is to degrade the true idea of God, compromise fatally His Mediatorial work, and endanger the stability of the moral and material Universe.

Men will acknowledge His influence, laud His ethics, and profess to follow His example, who deny His Divine personality, miraculous birth, atonement and resurrection. But wrong here, wrong everywhere.

(a) *The Virgin Birth*

The earliest attacks on the Person of Christ converged on His humanity. It was to prove "Jesus come in the flesh" that John wrote His epistles. To deny this is to undermine His atoning work. He must partake of flesh and blood in order to die; and to One of perfect holiness, death, viewed merely as physical dissolution, must have seemed more repulsive than to any man—not to speak of what His contact with sin and separation from God entailed. He must be truly man to be (1) the Seed of the woman and act the Kinsman's* part (Gen. 3.15; Gal. 4.4); (2) the Seed of Abraham to inherit the promises (Gal. 3.16); and (3) the Son of David, to claim the throne of Israel (1 Chron. 22.10). When king Ahaz refused to ask a sign, God gave one for all time greater than earth or heaven could afford: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7.14). This was fulfilled, as we know, by the birth of Jesus as narrated by Matthew and Luke.

Gesenius, the well-known Hebraist, of decided Modernist leanings, asserts that the word *galmath* does not mean 'virgin,' but "a youthful spouse recently married," and cites this passage in proof, which seems like begging the question. But it would hardly be a 'sign' for a "young married woman" to conceive and bear a son. Dr. Tregelles, a scholar of at least equal reputation with Gesenius, and his translator, denies his conclusions, and refers to the fact that the LXX renders the word 'virgin' by *parthenos* in this passage, which must have been a difficulty to them. *Galmath* in Punic does undoubtedly signify 'virgin,' as the doctor points out. Gesenius says that, '*b'thoolah*' is the true word for 'virgin,' but this is not always the case as a study of the references shows. *Galmath* occurs in six other places in the O.T.; in Gen. 24.16 of Rebecca; Exod. 2.8 of the Miriam; Ps. 68.25; Prov. 30.19; Cant. 1.3; 6.8. In not one of these occurrences is Gesenius' meaning apparent. One would suppose, as Dr. Tregelles suggests, that the use of the passage in Matt. 1.23 would settle the dispute for any Christian.

**Goel* is the equivalent of 'Redeemer' and 'Avenger,' because it was the next of kin who had the right to redeem and avenge.

If the Eternal Son was to become incarnate how else but by virgin-birth could it take place? If Jesus were the son of Mary and Joseph, then there was no "incarnation" and those who worship Jesus are credulous idolaters. To deny the virgin-birth and His Divine personality, while accepting results of His life and influence, is to accept transcendent effects without adequate cause.

But had Jesus not been what He claimed to be, there would have been no controversy about Him to-day, His very name would have sunk into oblivion, ere the first century passed away. How could a Jewish peasant, if He were only that, with a few unlettered followers, rejected by his own nation and dying a felon's death, have become the greatest influence the world has ever known, subduing empires and wills of men, so that nearly two thousand years after His death, His name is known and revered throughout the civilized world, and millions would die for Him, persuaded He is in fact "God manifest in flesh," their Redeemer and Lord?

Christ was then, indeed, "The Word become flesh," "tabernacling among men," "in the likeness of sinful flesh," with a real human body, spirit, and soul, passing through all the experiences proper to man and his mission. His body was *capable* of weariness, hunger, pain and death; His soul of all true sinless affections; His spirit of grief and joy. But we must not allow all this to eclipse the facts of his miraculous conception and Divine personality and innate sinlessness. Rather than say "He assumed *our* manhood," which might convey the idea of His partaking of our *sinful* nature, we should say, "He entered into manhood" and "all that is truly man finds in Him its perfect exponent and fulfilment."*

The much-debated passage in Philippians has usually been discussed in the light of the one word *ekenosen*—"He emptied Himself" (R.V.)—instead of the context, which seems to favour rather the A.V., "He made Himself of no reputation." We are told† that, at the time the N.T. was written, the word *kenoo* like so many others, had lost its strict etymological and classical meaning, and had become

***Christ Crucified**, p. 80, by Adolph Saphir.

†e.g., G. Bennets, B.A., D.D.

equivalent rather to the A.V., "to make of no reputation," which seems to fit in better with the context, for whatever the word meant for our Lord, we are called to experience the same ourselves. It would be unsound exegesis, therefore, to give it a meaning for our Lord which would make it impossible for us. "Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It is an attitude of *mind* we are to seek, not an evacuation of our memory, knowledge, scholarship, etc., which Modernism predicates of our Lord, without however, it would seem, any intention of emulating Him. We cannot perhaps close this section better than by quoting from the second of the "Thirty-Nine Articles." He entered into manhood "in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance, so that two whole and perfect natures . . . were found together in one Person, never to be divided."

(b) *Heresies relative to Christ's Humanity.*

But the integrity of the manhood of Christ has been tampered with and denied. The Docetae (*dokein*, "to appear") in early church times denied the reality of the Lord's body. It was only *apparently* flesh and bones. But His own words refute this, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24 : 39). Though He was to be *called* the Son of God, because He Who was the Eternal Son had become incarnate (the calling succeeding the being), He was also the firstborn son of Mary (Matt. 1.25). His was a true *human birth*, though altogether unique.

In the 4th century, Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea, in his eagerness to oppose Arianism and assert the Deity of Christ, was led so far as to deny the existence of a rational soul in Christ's human nature. For Him the Divine Logos took the place of the rational soul. If so, His humanity was defective and was that of an animal or idiot. Our Lord's words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" imply a rational soul. The idea that the body was a mere case in which the Divine person of the Son replaced the spiritual part of man, is entirely subversive of the truth

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of Christ's humanity. Man is tri-partite, spirit, soul and body. Another heretical teacher of the 5th century, Eutyches, a presbyter of Constantinople, taught that the Divine and human natures in Christ, instead of continuing distinct, coalesced into a third Divine nor human. This also denies the true humanity of our Lord; but Rom. 9.5 describes Him in the following sentences as, "according to the flesh" and as being He "Who is over all, God, blessed for ever."

On the other hand Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (A.D. 428) held the distinction of the two natures in such an extreme way, as to involve a dual personality, the Eternal Logos and the human soul. All these erroneous teachings, together with the crude Modernist views of our day, which deny to our Lord His divine* attributes, as being in conflict with true humanity, "arise from the deductions and inferences of human minds working in things too high for them." The humanity of Christ, though in some ways modified by the resurrection, is essentially unchanged. Could we with anointed eye pierce the unseen, passing the angelic hosts and all the hierarchies of heaven, we should see on the highest pinnacle of the Universe, the throne of the Father, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the Son of Man, glorified with the same "glory which He had with the Father, before the world was," no less truly and completely man than in this scene, for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," still the one Mediator between God and man—and a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, "being in *all things* made like unto His brethren," that is as Alford points out "all things wherewith the present argument is concerned." Heb. 2.18 Greek Text (*in loco*).

*Mark 13:32. "Neither the Son" is quoted as disproving this. It would be strange if one verse nullified a hundred. Fortunately we are not driven to this. There are different lines of interpretation. Dr. Shedd (Dogmatic Theology, Vol. I, p. 319) writes: "An official ignorance is meant. Augustine so explains. Christ as the Mediator was not authorized at that time to give information respecting the time of the final judgement." See in this connection 1 Cor. 2.2, "I determined not to know, etc." The verse must be taken with Acts 1.7. Here, admittedly, Christ was no longer in any supposed "kenosis condition," and yet He says, "The Father hath put the times and seasons into His own power," and, therefore, it did not belong to the Son to reveal.

